MY CHINESE MARRIAGE

M. T. F.

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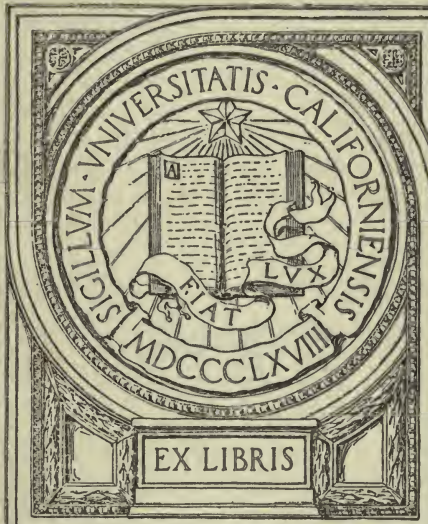

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MY CHINESE MARRIAGE

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By M. T. F.

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Contents

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TO MY CHINESE FATHER AND MOTHER
WITH THE GRATITUDE AND AFFECTION
OF THEIR AMERICAN DAUGHTER THIS
VOLUME IS DEDICATED

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I
IN AMERICA

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I

IN AMERICA

I SAW Chan-King Liang for the first time on a certain Monday morning in October. It was the opening day of college, and the preceding week had been filled with the excitement incidental to the arrival of many students in a small town given over to family life. Every household possessed of a spare room was impressed with the fact that good citizenship demanded that it harbour a student. Therefore, when I saw trunks and boxes and bags being tumbled upon the front porch of our next-door neighbour, I said to Mother, " Mrs. James has succumbed ! "

and set out for my first class with Celia, an old friend.

As we crossed the campus, we noticed a group of boys, gathered on the steps of College Hall and talking among themselves. Celia turned to me. "Do you see the one with very black hair, his face turned away a little—the one in the grey suit, Margaret? Well, that is the new Chinese student, and the boys all say he is a wonder. My cousin knew him last year in Chicago, where he was a freshman. Going in for international law and political science—imagine!"

I turned and glanced with a faint interest at the foreign student, on whose black hair the sun was shining. My first impression was of a very young, smiling lad. "Looks well enough," I said rather ungraciously, and we passed on.

I was a busy student, eagerly beginning my freshman year's work, and I thought no more of the young Chinese. But a

day or so later I discovered him to be the owner of those trunks and bags I had seen assembled on Mrs. James's porch. Chan-King was my next-door neighbour.

We were never introduced to each other, as it happened, and, though we shared studies in German and French, we did not exchange a word for some time. Later I found myself admiring his feat of learning two foreign languages through the medium of English, a third, and doing it so very well. At the same time, though I was not then aware of the fact, he was also admiring me for proficiency in these subjects, in which I was working hard, because I intended to teach languages.

The progress of my interest in him was gradual and founded on a sense of his complete remoteness, an utter failure to regard him as a human being like the rest of us. He was the first of his race I had ever seen. But finally we spoke to one another by some chance, and, after

that, it seemed unnecessary to refuse to walk to class with him on a certain morning when we came out of our houses at the same moment.

We parted at College Hall door with an exchange of informal little nods. I was happily impressed, but my impulse to friendship suffered a quick reaction from all that Chan-King was, when viewed against the background of his race as I saw it. I had no intention whatever of continuing our association.

Naturally, Chan-King knew nothing of this. I think I was probably a trifle more courteous to him than was necessary. I remember being uneasy for fear of wounding him by some thoughtless remark that would reveal my true state of mind about China. I lost sight of the race in the individual. I even pretended not to notice that he was waiting for me morning after morning when I emerged, always a trifle late, hurrying

to classes. By the close of the first semester, we were making the trip together almost daily as a matter of course.

He was gay and friendly, with a sort of frank joyousness that was his own special endowment for living. I enjoyed his companionship, his talk, his splendid spirit. His cheerfulness was a continual stimulant to my moody, introspective, static temperament. I used to study his face, which in repose had the true Oriental impassivity—a stillness that suggested an inner silence or brooding. But this mood was rare in those days, and I remember best his laughter, his shining eyes that never missed the merriment to be had from the day's routine events.

For a while we were merely two very conventional young students walking sedately together, talking with eagerness on what now seem amusingly sober and carefully chosen subjects. We were both determined to be dignified and impersonal.

I was nineteen, and Chan-King was two years older.

Finally, Chan-King asked to call and he appeared at the door that evening, laden with an enormous, irregular package, a collection of treasures that he thought might interest us. We all gathered about the library table, where he spread a flaming array of embroidered silks, carved ivory and sandalwood and curious little images in bronze and blackwood. They gave out a delicious fragrance, spicy and warm and sweet, with a bitter tang to it, a mingling of oils and lacquers and dust of incense.

He was very proud of half a dozen neckties his mother had made him, patterned carefully after the American one he had sent her as a souvenir. "She sews a great deal, and everything she does is beautiful," he said, stroking one of the ties, fashioned of wine-coloured silk and embroidered in a thin gold thread.

The simple words, the tangle of the

exotic things lying on the table, in that moment set the whole world between us. I saw him as alien, far removed and unknowable; I realized how utterly transplanted he must be, moving as he did in a country whose ideals, manners and customs must appear, at times, grotesquely fantastic to him. "How queer we must seem to you!" I exclaimed impulsively, lifting a solid, fat little idol in my hand.

"Queer? Not at all—but wonderfully interesting in everything. You see, to me it is all one world!" Our eyes met for a second. Then he offered me a small embroidered Chinese flag. I hesitated, looking at the writhing, fire-breathing dragon done in many-coloured silks. Again the old prejudice swept over me. I was about to refuse. But I saw in his eyes an expression of hesitating, half-anxious pleading, which touched me. I took the flag, puzzled a trifle over that look I had surprised.

Chan-King became a frequent visitor at our home in the evenings, making friends with my father and mother, with true Chinese deference. I like to remember those times, with all of us sitting around the big table, the shaded lamp casting a clear circle of light on the books and papers, the rest of the room in pleasant dimness. It was during these evenings that Chan-King told us about his father, typical Chinese product of his clan and time, who had early perceived the limitations of a too nationalistic point of view and had planned Western education for his sons, of whom Chan-King was the eldest. From his talk I reconstructed a half-picture of his home in southern China. It was a large household of brothers and relatives and servants ruled over by his mother during the prolonged absences of his father, whose business interests lay in a far-away island port.

Once he brought a faded photograph

of a small boy formally arrayed in the Chinese velvets and satins of an earlier period. "Myself at the age of six," he explained.

I examined the picture closely. "Why, Mr. Liang," I said, in wonder, "you are wearing a—wearing a—queue!"

He smiled, delighted at my confusion. "Yes, a very nice queue it was," he declared, "bound with a scarlet silk cord. I remember how it waved in the wind when I flew my kite on the hills!"

"You wore a black queue yourself, Margaret," interposed my mother, her eyes twinkling, "shorter than this, but often tied with a red silk ribbon."

"You see, we had that in common, at least," said Chan-King. And he flashed a grateful smile at Mother. There was a well-established friendship between my kindly, understanding mother and Chan-King while my feeling for him was still uncertain.

Yet, in spite of all these reasons for close sympathy with Chan-King, I felt towards him at times something amounting almost to dislike. Against such states of mind my sense of personal justice, a trait I had directly from my Scotch inheritance, instantly rebelled. I was careful in no way to reveal my feelings, though I probably should have done so had I even remotely realized that friendship was verging upon love. As it was, I had an ideal of genuine comradeship, of a pleasant interlude destined to end with our college days.

Towards the end of the winter, as our acquaintance advanced, there came to me a series of those revulsions. I assured myself that so ephemeral a relation as ours must be was hardly worth the time I was giving to it. I remembered that, fine as Chan-King was, he belonged to the Chinese race. I decided to put an end to the entire episode at once. The

way in which I carried out this plan was unnecessarily abrupt. I avoided him unmistakably, going to class and returning home by a roundabout way, and refusing to see him either in class or on the campus.

Then, one afternoon at the end of two weeks, he was waiting for me before the main door of College Hall. I did not speak. He joined me without a word and walked in silence to the campus edge. I turned suddenly toward a side street. "Go that way if you like," I said rudely. "I have an errand this way."

He came with me. "I wish to talk with you," he said, with an oddly restrained, patient tone of weariness. Our eyes met, and I saw in his a gentle and touching determination to understand and be understood, which would have been more significant to me if I had been less engrossed in my own emotions.

"Why do you wish to end our friend-

ship?" he asked quietly, with his characteristic frankness.

"I—because I thought it was best," I stammered, completely disarmed.

"It is never best to give up a friendship," he said. "But it happens that our friendship may end soon after all. It is possible I shall return to China. To-day I received a cablegram from my father, saying my mother is dangerously ill. I shall know within a day or so whether I am to go or to stay."

Human sympathy triumphed over race prejudice. "Come home with me," I said, "and let Mother talk to you. She always knows what to say."

Another cablegram two days later brought the good news of his mother's improvement. Chan-King's anxiety during those two days wrung me. He said nothing, but his face was strained and lined. He walked and we talked a good deal of other things, and he gave me

definite outlines of his "life-plan," as he called it. He regarded the diplomatic service of his country as his final goal, but, on the way to it, he wished to take part in constructive teaching and sociological work in China. He was keenly enthusiastic about the ancient arts and natural beauties of China and venerated many of her old customs. "I hope introducing modern education will not destroy the beauty of the East," he told me, but he was solidly convinced of the need for new ideas in all the Orient. I began to see his country through new eyes.

We were soon going about together a great deal. I remember many happy parties on the lantern-lighted campus, many field-days and tennis matches, all the innocent freedom of college life that we enjoyed together. I was rather remote in my personal friendships, and very little was said to me regarding my association with the Chinese student. But now I

began to hear small murmurs, a vague hum of discussion, and to observe an interested watching of us by the students and townspeople. I could not help seeing that curious glances followed us when we entered a tea-room or concert hall together.

Several friends of my mother's spoke disapprovingly to her of the matter. "What if they should fall in love—marry?" asked one conventional-minded old lady. But my mother was born without prejudices and never sees boundary lines or nationalities. She was infinitely tactful and kind. I know now that she was rather uneasy, for she felt that marriage is a difficult enough relation when each person knows the other's heritage and formulas; but she said nothing to make me self-conscious, not even repeating the remarks of her acquaintances until long afterwards.

However, I heard comments from other sources, which irritated me a trifle and

had the perfectly natural effect of stimulating my loyalty to Chan-King and arousing at times a yearning tenderness to shield him from injustice. At this time we tentatively expressed our views on intermarriage. We were sitting in the porch late one afternoon. "I believe marriage between alien races is a mistake," I said, in the decisive way I cultivated at that time. "It is better to marry one's own kind."

"No doubt there are fewer difficulties," he answered without conviction. "It is all so much a personal problem. Marriages between Americans do not seem to be always successful."

I flared. "We hear only of the unhappy ones," I retorted.

"But there are many, many unhappy ones, then," he returned gently. "I wonder if unhappy marriage in all countries is not due to selfishness and lack of love and to unwillingness to compromise on unimportant differences."

We could not possibly quarrel here, and our talk proceeded amiably.

My thoughts at dinner that night seem very amusing to me as I recall them now. Chan-King was so like one of us, as we sat at table together, that I found myself wondering if it was true that a Chinese wife did not eat at the same table with her husband; if she actually did wait upon him and obey him without question in everything; if Chan-King would return to China soon and there become an insufferable, autocratic Eastern husband. The thought oppressed me unbearably. Since Chan-King was leaving next day on a summer-vacation trip, this was a farewell dinner. He insisted on helping me with the dishes afterwards, for ours was a simple household, and we usually had no maid. We were very merry over the task. "In China," he confided, as he stacked the saucers, "the lot of women is much easier. They have servants for

everything of this kind. I know an Englishwoman who married a Chinese, and she afterwards taught in a college for the sake of something to do."

"She did quite right," I said. "Idleness is not good for anyone."

"Chinese wives are not idle," he answered gravely, "they have many duties for every one in their household."

At this he turned his eyes upon me, with an intent, inner look. Because I was impressed, I chose to be flippant.

"If I obstruct your view, I will move," I said.

"It would do no good," he answered. "You are always there—wherever I want to look."

Later he was writing his name in Chinese characters on a photograph he had given my mother. I stood beside him. He dropped the pen, turned to me and took both my hands in his own. He bent toward me, and I drew away, shaking my

head decisively. I wrenched one hand free, and the kiss he meant for my lips reached my fingers instead. I was overwhelmed with a sense of invasion. We quarrelled, but without bitterness or real anger. I was simply convinced that, since love was not for us, we were bound by all ethics to keep our relations in the outward seeming of friendship. For a moment I felt that one of my ideals had been rudely shattered.

"Oh, but you have mistaken me!" he declared earnestly, refusing to release my hand.

"Kisses are not for friendship," I managed to say.

"I'm sorry," he confessed, but I saw in his eyes that he regretted my misunderstanding of him, nothing more.

During his summer travels he wrote me many letters. I had time to think, and in my thoughts I admitted that to be a friend of Chan-King was better than

to have the love of anyone else in the world.

When he returned, we wandered together one evening down to the campus and sat on a stone bench in the moon-shade of a tall tree. I had overheard a remark, tinged with race prejudice, that had awakened again in my heart that brooding maternal tenderness, and when Chan-King's eyes pleaded wistfully I gave him, as a sacrificial offering, the kiss before denied.

That autumn he transferred for a year to a New England university. He told me long afterwards it was so that absence might teach me to know my own heart. I loved him now and admitted it to myself with bitter honesty. But all fulfilment of love seemed so hopeless and remote, the chasm fixed between our races seemed so impassable, that I gave up in my heart and put away his letters as they came, smiling with affected youthful cynicism

at the memory of that kiss, which could mean nothing more to us than a sweet and troubled recollection.

He came back unexpectedly at the end of the college term. There was an indescribably hopeful, anxious look in his eyes as he took my hands. My first sight of his face, grown older and graver in those long months, brought a shock of poignant happiness, very near to tears. Off guard, we met as lovers, with all antagonisms momentarily swept away, all pretences forgotten. I went to his arms as my one sure haven. For this hour love made everything simple and happy.

My father and mother were astonished when we told them of our intention to marry. With gentle wisdom, Mother suggested that we should allow ourselves a year of engagement, " in order to be sure," as she expressed it. We were very sure, but we consented.

Chan-King wrote at once to his people

in south China, telling of his engagement. For me, he had one important explanation, made in his frank, straightforward way. "In China," he told me, "it is usual for parents to arrange their children's marriages, often years in advance. When I was very young, it was generally understood that I would later marry the daughter of my father's good friend, three years younger than I. There was no formal betrothal, and, when I left home to study, I asked my father not to make any definite plans for my marriage until my return. The subject has never been mentioned since, and I don't know what his ideas are now. But they can make no difference with us —you understand that, Margaret, dear?" Again I felt myself in spiritual collision with unknown forces and wondered at his calmness in opposing the claims of his heredity.

His family replied to his letter with a

cablegram, forbidding the marriage. I had never seriously expected any other decision. A letter followed, conciliatory in tone, in which his father explained that, since Chan-King's foreign education was nearly completed, arrangements had been made for his marriage to Miss Li-Ying immediately upon his return home. He gave a charming description of his bride, whom Chan-King had not seen for twelve years. She was, he said, young and modest and kind, she was beautiful and wealthy, and, moreover, had been given a modern education in order to fit her for the position of wife to an advanced Chinese. The match was greatly desired by both families. In conclusion, the letter urgently requested that Chan-King would not make it impossible for his father to fulfil the contract he had entered into with a friend, and very gently intimated that by so doing he would forfeit all right to further consideration.

There were other letters. An American friend, a missionary, wrote—oh, very tactfully—of the difficulties he would have in keeping an American wife happy in the Orient. A Chinese cousin discussed at length the sorrows a foreign daughter-in-law would bring into his house—the bitterness of having in the family an alien and stubborn woman, who would be unwilling to give his parents the honour due to them or to render them the service they would expect of their son's wife.

Many letters of this kind came in a group. There was a hopeless tone of finality, a solid clan consciousness in those letters that frightened me a little. I was uneasy, uncertain. I had found no irreconcilable elements in our minds, for I was very conservative West, and he was very liberal East. But here were represented the people with whom his life must be spent and the social background against which it must harmoni-

ously unfold. I felt with terrific force that it was not Chan-King, but Chan-King's traditions and ancestors, his tremendous racial past, that I must reckon with.

Also, I did not wish to stand in the way of his future. I doubt if I could have found courage to marry Chan-King, if I had then realized the importance —especially in diplomatic and political circles—of clan and family influence in China. But he gave it up so freely, with such assured and unregretful cheerfulness, that I could not but share his mood.

In these calm, logical, impersonal family letters, which Chan-King translated for me, there was a strain of sinister philosophy that chilled me as I read. The letters dealt entirely with his duty in its many phases—to his parents, to his ancestors, to his country, to his own future. Nothing of love! Only one relative—a cousin—mentioned it at all, and in this wise: "You are young now, and to youth love

seems of great importance. But, as age replaces youth, you will find that love runs away like water."

"That is not true, Chan-King," I said, with solemn conviction. "Love is greater than life or age; it lives beyond death. It is love that makes eternity!"

At this time, Chan-King did not quite comprehend my mystical interpretation of love. But he answered very happily, "To have you for my wife is worth everything else the world can offer."

Chan-King continued to write to his family briefly and respectfully, declining to be influenced in any way. Replies came at lengthening intervals and then ceased. There was no open breach, no violent tearing asunder of bonds. Courteously, quite gently, the hands of his people were removed, and he stood alone.

"But surely your mother will not give you up!" I exclaimed one day when it dawned on me that not one message

had she sent in all the correspondence.

"Not in her dear heart," he said, with unshaken faith, "but of course she will not write to me if my father disapproves."

"But a mother, Chan-King!" I protested. "Surely her feelings come first always!"

Chan-King's tone was patient after the manner of one who has explained an obvious fact many times. "In China," he reminded me again, "the family comes always before the individual. But with you and me, Margaret beloved, love has first importance."

His never-failing insistence upon viewing ours as an individual instance, not to be judged by any ordinary standards, was a source of great strength to me always. During the short period that followed before our marriage, we tiffed a few times in the most conventional manner, with fits of jealousy that had no

foundation; small distrusts that on my part were mere efforts to uphold what I considered my proper feminine pride, and on his, were often failures to discount this characteristic temper of mine. Only, somehow, there was never any rancour in our quarrels. Not once would we deny our love for each other.

So we planned to be married immediately. There were no reasons why we should delay further. That is to say, none but practical reasons, and what have they to do with young people in love? "It is a little late for us to begin practical thinking," said Chan-King cheerfully, when we discussed ways and means. "But we might as well make the experiment."

Chan-King was no longer merely a student with a generous allowance from a wealthy father. On his own resources, with his education not completed, he was about to acquire a foreign wife and to face an

untried world. We were strangely light-hearted about all this. Chan-King had regularly put by more than half of his allowance since coming to America. I meant to be a teacher of languages, economically independent if circumstances required such aid for a man beginning a career. Our plans were soon completed. At the end of another term, which we would finish together, Chan-King would be graduated, and then, after a year of practice in his profession, he would return to China, there to begin his life work. I was to follow later. Nothing could have been more delightfully simple so far as we could see. A few days later we were married in my mother's house by an Anglican clergyman. "Of course you will live here with us until you go to China," my parents had said. "We want our children with us, if you can be happy here."

This seemed a very natural arrange-

ment to Chan-King, accustomed as he was to family life. But I was apprehensive. The popular Western idea that people cannot be friends if they are related by law was heavy on my mind. I did not expect any drastic readjustment of temperament between my Chinese husband and me, but I did look forward somewhat timorously to a trying period of small complications due to differences in domestic customs and the routine of daily living.

I need not have worried a moment; a wonderful spirit of family co-operation was an important part of Chan-King's Oriental heritage. From the day of our wedding he took his place with charming ease and naturalness as a member of the household. The affection that existed between my husband and my parents simplified that phase of our relation perfectly, and left us free to adjust ourselves to each other and the world, though

the latter we took very little into account. Until I met Chan-King, the idea of being conspicuous was unendurable to me. But when I early perceived that to appear with him anywhere was to invite the gaze of the curious, I discovered with surprise that it mattered not at all. I was very proud of my husband and loved to go about with him. We were happy from the beginning.

Discovering life together proved a splendid adventure, which renewed itself daily. The deep affection and tenderness between us created subtle comprehensions too delicate to be put into words. A quick look interchanged during a pause in talk would often convey a complete thought. I always felt that Chan-King had acuter perceptions, more reserve, and more imagination than I. Also he was meticulous —as I was not—in regard to small amenities. I had always been used to having my own way without causing discomfort to

anyone else, but I found that I could not speak carelessly or act thoughtlessly without the risk of violating his sense of the fitness of things. My greatest difficulty in the first few months of our marriage came from my constant effort to adjust my mode of thought and action to meet a highly trained and critical temperament, to whom the second-bests of association, spiritual or mental or material, were not acceptable. Yet, if he exacted much, he gave more. In everything, he had a generosity so sincere and spontaneous that it aroused a like quality in me.

I am in many ways the elemental type of woman, requiring, I know, a certain measure of domination in love. It was imperative that I should respect my husband, and it pleased me to discover, in our several slight domestic crises, that his was far the stronger will. I had taken my vow to obey, having specified

that the word was not to be omitted from the marriage ceremony. How I should have kept it under a tyrannical will I do not know, for Chan-King was not a domestic dictator. He took it for granted that we were partners and equals in our own departments of life. He trusted my judgment in the handling of my share of our affairs, and in later years often came to me for advice in his own. Nevertheless, morally, the balance of power was in his hands, and I was glad to leave it there. Often our disagreements would end in laughter because each one of us would give way gradually from the position first assumed, until we had almost changed sides in the discussion. This happened again and again.

From the very beginning, I saw clearly, by some grace, the point at which Chan-King's Oriental mind and Occidental education came into the keenest conflict: my attitude towards other men

and their attitude toward me. He was never meanly jealous or suspicious, but there was in him that unconquerable Eastern sense of exclusiveness in love, that cherishing of personal possession, so incomprehensible to the average Western imagination.

I had planned to instruct a young man in French during the summer months, as a part of my vacation work, and I casually announced my intention to Chan-King. He opposed it at once, I thought unfairly. I was a great while persuading him to admit his real reasons for objecting. Finally I said, somewhat at random, "If my pupil were a girl, you would not care."

"You have enough work as it is," he persisted, but without firmness, and his eyes flickered away from mine. I laughed a little. He turned to me a face so distressed that my smile died suddenly. "Oh, don't laugh!" he said,

painfully in earnest. "You must keep in mind what you are to me. I—cannot be different. I am sorry."

I gave up my harmless young pupil and said nothing more. From that moment I began to form my entire code of conduct where men were concerned on a rigidly impersonal and formal basis. It was not difficult, for my first and only affection was centred in my husband, and the impulse to coquetry was foreign to my nature.

My husband's determination to leave my individuality untrammelled was sometimes overborne, in small ways that delighted me, by his innate sense of fitness. We played tennis and he played excellently. One day, as we left the courts, he said to me, "Tennis just isn't your game, Margaret. Your dignity is always getting in the way of your drive. I don't want you to give up your dignity —it is too much a part of you. But you

might leave tennis alone and try archery. I am sure that is more suited to your type." The amused obedience with which I took his suggestion soon became enthusiasm for the new sport.

To me, marriage had always seemed the most mystic and important of human relations, involving at times all the rest —and particularly parenthood. I am a born mother, to whom the idea of marriage without children is unthinkable. Since I put away my dolls, dream children had taken their place in the background of my fancy. I saw them vaguely at first, but with the coming of love I knew quite clearly how they would look. Now that I had married Chan-King, I should have liked a child at once as a surer bond between us and a source of comfort for myself while he would be making his start in China. I knew that he loved children, for on several occasions I had deliberately put a tiny neighbour in his

way and had taken note of his warm friendliness and gentleness with the wee thing. But, fearing that he would be unwilling to accept a new responsibility while our affairs were still unsettled, I put aside my desire for a child, though my loved books were growing strangely irksome. I did not know that my husband shared the usual foreign belief that the American woman is an unwilling mother.

Then one day he went to call on a friend of his, a Chinese student whose wife and little son were with him. "I saw the Chinese baby," he told me with boyish eagerness. "He is going to have a little brother soon. Lucky baby!"

"Lucky parents!" I corrected him, and sighed enviously. Chan-King looked at me, the wonder on his face growing into a delighted smile. "Do you mean it, Margaret?" he asked incredulously. Then we talked long and earnestly of

our children. To Chan-King's old-world mind, children should follow marriage as naturally as fruit the blossom, and his happiness in discovering that my ideals were exactly his own brought us to another plane of understanding and contentment with each other. Besides, he explained, a grandchild would do much to reconcile his parents to our marriage.

Happily, when the school term was over, I put aside my books for a needle. I had always been fond of sewing, but never had I found such fascinating work as the making of those tiny garments of silk and flannel and lawn. My practical mother protested against so much embroidering, but my husband only smiled as he rummaged gently through the basket of small sewing.

"You are a real Chinese wife, after all," he would say. "A Chinese wife sews and embroiders a great deal. She even makes shoes for the family."

"Shoes, Chan-King?"

"Shoes, no less. To make shoes beautifully is a fine art, and a Chinese woman takes pride in excelling at it. She is proud of her feet and makes all her own shoes."

Then he would tell me stories of his childhood and recall memories of the closed garden in his old home, where he played at battledore with a tiny girl, while her mother and his mother sat together, embroidering and talking in low tones. The two young mothers were friends and were planning for the marriage of their son and daughter, which would strengthen the friendship into a family bond.

I took great interest in this little girl, who flitted through Chan-King's stories like a brilliant butterfly seen through a mist. Her name was Li-Ying and she was only three years old when she ran, with her little feet still unbound, through

those sweetly remembered green gardens of his childhood. Somewhere now she was sitting, her lily feet meekly crossed, embroidering shoes, waiting until her father should betroth her to another youth.

When Chan-King showed me a portrait of himself, taken in a group with his mother and father when he was eight years old, I examined very thoughtfully the austerely beautiful face of the woman who had brought him into life. She sat on one side of the carved blackwood table. Her narrow, panelled skirt was raised a trifle to show her amazingly tiny feet. On the other side of the table sat Chan-King's father, an irreconcilably stern and autocratic-looking man, magnificently garbed in the old style. Beside him stood a small, solemn boy, wearing a round cap, his queue still bound, he told me, with a red cord, his hands lost in the long velvet sleeves that reached almost to his knees. I put my finger on the

head of this boy. "I hope our son will look exactly like him," I said.

At last the hoped-for son was born and laid in my arms. He was swaddled and powdered and new and he wept for obscure reasons. But my husband and I smiled joyfully at the delicious, incredible resemblance of that tiny face to his own. Chan-King looked at him a long time, a quizzical, happy smile in the corners of his mouth. Then he kissed me very gently and said, "He's a real Liang baby, Margaret. Are you glad?" I answered that I was glad, as I had been for everything love had brought to me.

Our plans progressed favourably, and, when our son Wilfred was five months old, Chan-King returned to China. I bid him good-bye in the way I knew would please him most—calmly and without tears. But, when it came to the last moment, I felt unable to let him go. Mutely I clung to him, the baby on my arm between us.

"It won't be for long, this," he assured me. "We shall all be together at home very soon. You are brave and dear and true, Margaret. You shall never be made sorry. Be patient."

His first letters told of his new work in one of the older colleges for which Shanghai is famous. He also began his practice of law in an official capacity. His first step toward the diplomatic service had been taken.

At the end of four months, I received his summons and went about making ready for the journey to China with my young son. My life-work was to help my husband in making a home. His life-work was in China. The conclusion was so obvious that neither I nor my parents had ever questioned it. But, now that the moment had come, the friends of the family were very much excited. They asked strange questions. Are you really going? How can you leave your mother?

How can you give up beautiful America? Aren't you afraid to go to China? I answered as patiently and reasonably as I could. They wearied me very much.

Of China itself I had no clear conception, in spite of Chan-King's letters, for, though my old prejudice had passed away, still I saw all the country only as a background for my husband's face.

I followed Chan-King's minute instructions concerning travelling arrangements, and Wilfred and I had a pleasant voyage. Early one morning I looked through the port-hole and saw about me the murky waters of the Yangtze, alive with native craft, while dimly through the mist loomed the fortifications of Woosung. Already the tender was waiting, and soon we were aboard, moving rapidly up the mouth of the river. The mist cleared, green banks arose on each side, and through distant trees gleamed red brick buildings like any at home, side by side with the

white-plastered walls and tip-tilted roofs of China. In that long ride, Shanghai grew upon me gradually, a curious mixture of the known and the unknown, tantalizing me with the feeling that I had seen all this before and ought to remember it better. In the water about me, steamer, launch and battle-ship mingled with native junk, river-barge and house-boat. Suddenly in the waiting group on the customs jetty I saw my husband. In another moment we had drawn alongside the wharf and he was in the tender beside me, greeting me in the formally courteous manner he deemed suited to public occasions. Taking Wilfred in his arms, he drew me up the steps and to a waiting carriage.

Here again was the confused mingling of the strange and the familiar: clanging tram-cars, honking motor-cars, smooth-rolling rickshaws, creaking wheel-barrows and lumbering, man-drawn trucks; dark

coolie-faces under wide straw hats, gently bred features beneath pith helmets, black, bearded countenances below huge, gay turbans; a bewildering jumble of alien and English speech.

Even in Chan-King I found it. He was wearing American dress, his face had not changed, the tones of his voice were the same, but he was speaking Chinese, and his directions to the *mafoo* were to me a meaningless succession of sounds.

But, when he was beside me in the carriage and the horses had started, he turned suddenly and smiled straight into my eyes. Then, Shanghai, Borneo or the North Pole—all would have been one to me. I asked no questions; I was with my husband and child, driving rapidly towards the home prepared for me. I had come home to China.

II
IN SHANGHAI

II

IN SHANGHAI

MY first impressions of Shanghai are a blur. My husband and I drove rapidly along the Bund, over Garden Bridge, which might have been any bridge in America, past the Astor House, which was very like any American hotel, and then along the Soochow Creek, which could be only in China.

On North Szechuan Road we stopped at a *li*, or terrace, of newly built houses in the style called semi-foreign. This *li*, which was in the International Settlement, was very bright and clean. It opened upon the main thoroughfare. The heavy walls of bright red brick were interrupted at intervals by black doors bearing brass plates. At one of

these my husband stopped and touched a very American-looking push-button. A bell trilled within, and the door was opened by a smiling "boy" in a long blue cotton gown. We crossed a small courtyard bright with flowers and vines, and, coming to the main entrance, stepped directly into a large square room. It was cool, immaculate and restful. The matting-covered floors, the skilfully arranged tables, chairs and sofa, the straight hangings of green and white, threaded with gold, were exactly what I should have wished to choose for myself. I was pleasantly surprised by the gas chandelier with its shades of green and gold and white. A dark green gas radiator along one wall suggested that Shanghai was not always so warm as then. It was a very modest little home, befitting a man with his own way to make, Chan-King explained, as he led me through the rooms for a hasty survey.

Then Wilfred was surrendered to his *amah*, a fresh-cheeked young woman in stiffly starched blue "coat," white trousers and apron, while we made ready for a tiffin engagement with Chinese friends of Chan-King's.

After a short rickshaw ride—novel and delightful to me—we turned from the main road into another series of terraces and entered a real Chinese household. The host and hostess, who had both been in America and spoke excellent English, were very cordial in their welcome. I felt more at home than I had believed could be possible. Tiffin was served in the Chinese fashion, the guests seated at a great round table, with the dishes of meat, fish and vegetables placed in the centre, so that each one could help himself as he chose. Individual bowls of rice, small plates, chopsticks and spoons were at each plate. Set at intervals, were small, shallow dishes containing soy, mus-

tard or catsup and also roasted melon-seeds and almonds. When my hostess, who had thoughtfully rounded out her delicious Chinese menu with bread and butter and velvety ice-cream, as thoughtfully produced a silver knife and fork for me, my husband explained that I was rather deft in the use of chopsticks. Though he had taught me, during the early days of our marriage, to use a slender ivory pair that he possessed, I was now very nervous, but I felt obliged to prove his delighted assertion. So my social conformity as a Chinese wife began there, before a friendly and amused audience, who assured me that I did very well.

On the way home Chan-King said, "Will this be difficult for you, Margaret?"

"Chopsticks?" I asked gaily, well enough knowing that he did not mean chopsticks. "No, I like them!"

"I mean everything," he said very

gravely, "China—customs, people, home-sickness, everything."

"You will see whether you haven't married a true Oriental," I answered him. "As for home-sickness, why, Chan-King—I am at home."

The most important thing at first, materially speaking, was that Chan-King must make his own way without help of any sort. And for the upper class Chinese this is very difficult. He was teaching advanced English in one of the largest colleges in Shanghai, maintaining a legal practice and giving lectures on international law. He was glad to be at home again, filled with enthusiasm for his work, hopeful as the young returned students always are at first, and, through sheer inability to limit his endeavours, working beyond his strength.

Our happiness at being together again made all things seem possible. From its fragmentary beginnings in America,

we gathered again into our hands the life we expected to make so full and rich. My part, I recognized, was to be a genuinely old-fashioned wife—the rôle I was best fitted for, and the one most helpful to Chan-King. And I began by running my Chinese household with minute attention to providing for his comfort in small ways that he liked and never failed to appreciate.

Our two-story house consisted of two big rooms downstairs and sleeping apartments and a tiny roof-garden upstairs. In this roof-garden I spent most of my time, and there Wilfred and his *amah* passed many afternoons. It was a pleasant, sunny place, furnished with painted steamer chairs, rugs and blooming plants in pottery jars. At the back, rather removed from the main part of the house, were the kitchen, servants' quarters and an open-air laundry. We were really very practical and modern and comfortable.

Our kitchen provided for an admirable compromise between old and new methods. It had an English gas-range and a Chinese one. But the proper Chinese atmosphere was preserved by three well-trained servants who called themselves Ah Ching, Ah Ling and Ah Poh. Most Shanghai servants are called simply "Boy" or "Amah" or "Coolie," but ours chose those names, as distinctive for servants there as "James" and "Bridget" are with us. Ah Ching did most of the house-work and the running of errands; Ah Ling did the marketing and cooking, giving us a pleasantly varied succession of Chinese and foreign dishes; Ah Poh, the *amah*, looked after Wilfred and attended to my personal wants.

From the first I was fond of Ah Poh, with her finely formed, intelligent features, her soft voice and gentle, unhurried manner. She had served an American mistress before coming to me, but showed

a surprising willingness to adopt my particular way of doing things, whether in making beds, in keeping my clothes in order or in entertaining Wilfred. On the other hand, Ah Ching, elderly, grave and full of responsibility, was very partial to his accustomed way of arranging furniture and of washing windows and floors. If left to himself, he would dust odd nooks and corners faithfully, but if I made any formal inspection of his labours he would invariably slight them, to intimate that I should not be suspicious, as a friend explained—a form of logic that I found highly amusing. Ah Ling, aside from his culinary ability, was chiefly interesting because his eyes were really oblique —as Chinese eyes are supposed to be, and usually are not, and because his hair really curled—as Chinese hair is supposed never to do, and does occasionally.

For a young pair bent on thrift, we may have seemed very extravagant indeed.

In similar circumstances in America, I should probably have thought it extravagant to have even one servant. But this household was a very small one for China and, on our modest income, we maintained it with a satisfactory margin.

Chan-King was helpful and showed great tact and understanding in getting our establishment under way. I would not confess to my utter bewilderment in trying to manage servants who did not understand half of what I said to them. I think he became aware that I was holding on rather hard at times during those first months, and he never failed me. In turn, I helped him revise his papers in the evenings and assisted him with his letters, and he used to call me his secretary. We discovered during that first year in China that we had formed a true partnership.

Our social life was very pleasant. We entertained a great deal, in a simple

way. We belonged to a club or two and kept in close touch with the work of the returned students, who have become an important factor in the national life. Though wishing to conserve what is best in the civilization of China, they are bringing Western ideas to bear upon the solution of political, sociological and economic problems. Many of these students, as well as other interesting people, both Chinese and foreign, gathered at our house for dinners and teas.

There was a veteran of the customs service, a portly gentleman with bristling white moustache, who had been one of the first group of Government students sent to America fifty years before. He told interesting stories of the trials and joys of those early days and humorously lamented the fact that real apple-pie was not to be obtained in China. There was a distinguished editor of English publications, a tall, spare figure, whose

very quietness suggested reserves of mental power. With him often was a short, energetic man in early maturity—a far-sighted educator and convincing orator. I remember a lively discussion opened up by these two concerning the need for a Chinese magazine devoted to the interests of the modern woman of China—an early dream, which is now being fulfilled. There was a retired member of Parliament with an unfailing zeal for political discussion, who has since returned to the service of his Government. Also a smiling young man, who went about persuading Old China of her need for progress, but who could on occasion put aside his dignity to indulge a talent for diverting bits of comedy. There was the Chinese-American son of a former diplomat, who—born in America and coming to China as a grown man—seemed definitely to recognize his kinship with the land of his fathers, a fact that Chan-King and I found inter-

esting for its possible bearing on the future of our own sons. Naturally, most of our friends were the younger modern folk, who were loosening the ancient bonds of formality in their daily lives. But many of the older and more conservative people also used to come to our evening gatherings, where my husband and I received side by side.

As I came to know the Chinese, I was delighted with their social deftness. They look upon grace of manner and courtesy as the foundations of all social life. I was pleasantly impressed by the measure of deference that they showed to wives, daughters, sisters and friends—so different from the contempt that Western imagination supposes to be their invariable share. Occasionally I noticed a husband carefully translating that his wife might fully enjoy the conversation. Many of the women, however, spoke English excellently. All our receptions and dinners

were delightfully free and full of good talk. The Chinese have so beautifully the gift of saying profound things lightly; they can think deeply without being heavy and pedantic.

I remember the first dinner-party I attended in Shanghai. It was rather a grand affair, with many guests, all Chinese save me—"And I'm almost Chinese," I said to my husband. The men and women all sat together around one great table, in excellent humour with each other, and the talk was very gay.

A little Chinese woman whom I knew rather well said to me later, "And think of it—only last year in this house we should have been at separate tables!" When I asked her to explain, she said that once men did not bring their guests to their homes at all. Then they brought them, but entertained them in the men's side of the house. Later they admitted women to dine in the same room, but

at separate tables, and now, here we are, chatting and dining together quite in Western fashion. "I like this much better," the little lady decided.

I was glad to see that all of them wore Chinese dress, for it is most impressively beautiful. I wore my first jacket and plaited skirt that night, a combination of pale green and black satin, and now and then I would see Chan-King's eyes turned upon me with the look I best loved to see there—a clear, warm affection shining in them, a certain steady glow of expression that had love and friendship and understanding in it. I think the sight of me in the dress of his country confirmed in his mind my declaration that I loved China—that I wanted to be a real Chinese wife.

After this, though for certain occasions the American fashion seemed more appropriate, I wore Chinese dress a great deal. I remember a day when Dr. Wu Ting-

fang came to dinner, and, as he bowed to me, obviously took note of my garb.

He looked at me very keenly for a moment, as if he meant to ask a serious question. Then he said, in his abrupt manner, "You are happy in that dress?"

"Indeed I am," I answered.

"You like it better than you like American clothes?" he persisted.

I nodded firmly, smiling and catching my husband's eye.

"Then wear it always," said the Doctor, with a pontifical lifting of his fingers.

Oddly enough, my husband did not care for the native feminine fashion of trousers and never permitted me to wear them. I considered them very graceful and comfortable, but gladly adopted the severely plain skirts with the plaits at the sides.

I had put on China, to wear it always, in my heart and mind, and thought only of my husband, his work and his people.

In the beginning, I should have been perfectly content to remain cloistered, to meet no one save a few woman friends, to go nowhere. Life flowed by me so evenly that I was happy to drift with it, filled with dreams. The noises of hurrying, half-modernized Shanghai reached me but vaguely, deep within my cool, quiet house where the floors were spread with white matting and the walls were hung with symbolic panels. The click of the ponies' feet on the pavement, the thud of the rickshaw coolies' heels as they drew their noiseless, rubber-tyred vehicles, the strident scream of the motor horns, the strange, long cries of the street venders, all came to me muffled as through many curtains that sheltered me from the world. But my husband insisted that I should go about with him everywhere that he felt we should go, that I should help him entertain, that I should meet and mingle with many people, both foreign and Chinese.

He was always ready to advise me on social matters, a more difficult undertaking than might be supposed. I have already spoken of the many gradations in the meeting of East and West. These alone are confusing enough, and there are further complexities due to the fact that in the two civilizations the fine points of etiquette are often entirely at variance. A single example will suffice —the custom of serving a guest, as soon as seated, with some form of refreshment. In the very conservative Chinese household, if the visitor even touches the cup of tea, placed beside him on a small table, he is guilty of a gross breach of good manners. In the ultra-modern household, he must drink the iced summer beverage or the piping hot winter drink, to avoid giving offence. Then there are the variously modified establishments, where he attempts an exact degree of compromise, whether acknowledging the

offering merely by a gracious bow, or going further by raising it to the lips for a dainty sip, or being still more liberal and consuming one-half the proffered amount. That such situations are often baffling, even to Young China, I have heard it laughingly confessed in many lively discussions. But, though occasional errors are inevitable, sincere good-will is truly valued and seldom misunderstood. Chan-King's ability to consider all points of view at once was very helpful to me.

But he forgot to warn me that in Shanghai social calling is proper at any hour of the day from nine o'clock in the morning until ten o'clock at night. I was therefore three days in learning, during a short absence of his, that early morning and late evening calling was an institution, and not an accidental occurrence, as I at first supposed. Finally, Ah Ching gave me a hint. I was in

négligé, preparing for a morning of lazy play with Wilfred and hoping there would be no interruptions, when Ah Ching appeared and announced callers. My face must have expressed surprise and a shade of annoyance, as it had for three days previously at these summonses, for Ah Ching hesitated a moment and then vouchsafed what he plainly considered a valuable piece of information. "In Shanghai," said Ah Ching, "he all time go to see —all time come to see." He paused. "*All* time!" he added firmly and departed. I found this to be literally true and I therefore formed my habits of dress on the assumption that callers demanding the utmost formality of behaviour and appearance might be announced at any moment.

Needless to say, Ah Ching's "he" was pidgin-English for "she," for my personal visitors were all women. They were of many nationalities—Chinese of course,

and also American, Canadian, English, Scotch and French. With the Chinese women, especially, I found myself in perfect harmony. Nowhere, I believe, do sincerity and good-will meet with a warmer response. They accepted me with a cordiality that was very real and rendered invaluable assistance in my initiation into the new life. They took me calling, shopping and marketing until Shanghai ceased to be a bewildering maze of crowded thoroughfares; they helped me to understand the complexities of Chinese currency; they explained the intricate points of fashion in dress and recommended skilful tailors.

From the first we were deeply interested in the meeting and blending of East and West that went on about us everywhere, in every field of endeavour. We found unique opportunity for fresh impressions in the Second Far Eastern Olympics held at Shanghai that spring. In the presence of many thousand specta-

tors, China, the Philippines and Japan strove for supremacy in athletic prowess. The affair was managed entirely by Chinese, and during most of the contests my husband was busy on the grounds in an official capacity. I sat in the grandstand with Chinese women friends, some of whom were returned students, and the rousing cheers, the whole-hearted enthusiasm, brought to us vivid memories of college days in America. The evenings were filled with receptions and garden parties in honour of the visitors. Of course our pleasure in the whole affair was immeasurably heightened by China's well-earned triumph.

As the months passed, Chan-King's high-hearted enthusiasm, his dauntless will to carry through great work in the education of Young China, flagged to some degree, from terrible disillusionment.

This is the problem all returned students have sooner or later to face and conquer.

They come home brimming with hope and filled with aspirations towards their country's betterment. And gradually they are forced to acknowledge one enormous fact—that China has been her glorious, grim old self for too many centuries, her feet are sunk too deeply in the earth of her ancient traditions, to be uprooted by one generation of youth—or two or three or a hundred.

Chan-King chafed and worried and worked too hard. Strangely enough, he grew home-sick for America, though I did not.

"America strides like a young boy, and China creeps like an old woman!" he said bitterly one day after attending a meeting of the college board, where his modern ideas of education had suffered a defeat at the hand of the reactionary body.

"But China is a wise, wise old woman!" I replied gently.

And very often during this time I would uphold the traditions of the East while Chan-King championed the ways of the Western world.

My husband underwent disappointments, irritations and trials that would have been unendurable in a less securely poised nature. As it was, he suffered so in the great things that he had but little patience for the small ones, and I often found him sudden of temper, with a quick asperity of tone and finality of judgment that showed me clearly how great a strain he was under.

But with us there was always love. And Chan-King was very careful to make me understand, even in the midst of small disappointments and vexations, that these things were the universal human annoyances that had nothing to do with regrets or a sense of alienation. I broke into tears one day when a sharp little scene occurred over nothing at all. "Oh, Mar-

garet, my dearest!" he said, taking me in his arms, "these moods mean nothing between us, when we love each other so! Don't take them seriously! What could destroy our happiness now?" In spite of the world-wide difference in our race and upbringing, whatever difficulties of temperamental adaptation we had to meet were merely such as must be faced by any husband and wife in any land.

Yet Chan-King's personal fascination for me, his never-failing appeal to my imagination, were definitely founded on the Oriental quality in him. I found throughout the years, in every phase of our relation, a constant, irresistible, always recurring thrill in the idea that we were not of the same race or civilization.

Once when I confessed this fact to him, he said, "Do you love me only because I am Chinese?"

"No—I think I should have loved

you no matter what race you came of. But how can I know ? "

" I like to feel that you love the essential *me*."

" Yes, but the essential *you* is Chinese."

He thought a moment. " Chinese, yes, but a most respectable member of the Dutch Reformed Church of America ! "

" I won't let that injure you in my eyes ! " I assured him, laughing. I was of the Anglican faith, and we often referred to the strange mixture of nationalities in our creeds.

My husband, in spite of his firm faith, was not of a deeply religious mind, and of the two I was much more mystical in my beliefs. Love, divine and human, had come to mean everything to me, in a literal and spiritual sense. I believed, obscurely at first, but with increasing surety and faith as time went on, that human love also was not of time only, but of eternity as well. And, when I

found that Chan-King did not share this belief, I felt, for the only time in all my marriage, alien to him, shut out by an impalpable veil from his profoundest inner life, which I wished passionately to share in everything. The discovery came hand in hand with our first shadow—only the shadow of a shadow, I might call it, so vague, at the beginning, that we could not feel more than an uneasiness.

Chan-King fell ill, though not seriously, and he recovered quickly. But on the up-curve of returning health he never quite regained the old plane of physical well-being. Signs—oh, the very smallest of signs—warned us of a grave, slow breaking down of his system under phthisis. We could not quite believe it.

His physician advised him to ease the strain of work as much as he could. We talked together in the early hours of many nights, Chan-King always insisting that his depression was the result of tem-

porary fatigue, sure to pass away with a few weeks' repose in the open air of the hills.

It was during this time that I spoke to him of the everlastingness of love and my faith in a life farther on. "Where could death take one of us that the other could not follow?" I asked him, in strange triumph.

His eyes held mine a long minute. His face was very sad. "I am not sure of that. I have no idea of what we shall be to one another in another life. I am only sure that we are all things to each other now."

An inexpressible sense of fear took hold of me. Chan-King seemed at once terribly alien and removed; I could not speak, for I had the feeling of calling in a strange language across a great chasm. I said nothing for fear of distressing him, but he must have sensed my disquietude, for he took my hands

and held them to his face and let his eyes shine upon me. "Don't look like that," he said. "We have much time yet to think of eternity." But from the day of this illness the shadow was never once removed from me.

Now we were lured by the residential charms of the French Concession, with its broad, tree-lined avenues and fresh, wind-swept spaces. So we took a new house in a terrace fronting on Avenue Joffre. We liked our large rooms, each with its tiled fireplace, its polished floors laid with Tientsin rugs, its electric lights. There was a grassy lawn with Chinese orchids and a border of palms and magnolias, and just around the corner from us was a public garden where, to Wilfred's delight, dozens of children played each day under the care of their respective *amahs*. Our staff of servants was now increased to five by the addition of a rickshaw coolie and a second *amah*.

Chan-King received shortly after this a letter from his father, the first communication he had had from his family since our marriage. It contained an invitation to return home for a visit, since his mother wished very deeply to see him again.

"I can interpret this in only one way, Margaret," he said in a puzzled tone. "It is an offer of reconciliation. That means that they do not know you are with me."

"Go and see for yourself what it is," I told him. For I would have consented, for his sake, to a reconciliation on almost any terms. I had seen enough of Chinese family life to understand the powerful bonds of affection and interest that bind the clan together, and I felt in my own heart the cruelty of breaking those between mother and son and brother and brother.

"I want to tell them about you,"

Chan-King answered. "This is my opportunity."

Before accepting their invitation, Chan-King wrote and told them that his wife was with him. And their replies to this proved him right in his first surmise. His family knew he had returned to China and, having heard nothing further of his marriage, had supposed that it was all over. This was not exactly a surprising conclusion for them to reach. More than one foreign woman has refused to accompany her Chinese husband home. I myself came in contact with an occasional half-household, in which a Chinese was held in China by his business affairs while his wife waited for him on the other side of the world. Sometimes, too, she did not wait, and the marriage ended in the conventional way—that is, in the divorce court. Chan-King's people imagined that something of the sort had occurred to him, and were quite ready

to wipe out old scores and resume the ties of relationship.

After having written the initial letter of reconciliation, they held to their attitude in a thoroughbred way, only amending their welcome a trifle by requesting him to visit them alone. Very tactfully and gently they put it like this: his father was growing old and any sudden change disturbed him; the household had lately been added to by marriage and births, and he would find everything very much more comfortable if he should come alone.

He went, firmly resolved to change the mind of his family toward me. And I, too, was anxious for them to know that a foreign marriage had not harmed Chan-King. During the six weeks of his absence his letters were cheerfully non-committal, though he spoke of his happiness in being in his mother's house again. I thought a great deal about that house, the intri-

cate lives of the people in it and their many degrees of kinship and authority. Chan-King had told me enough to give me a fairly clear picture of them. I had always admired their ability to sustain difficult relations under the same roof with the utmost good temper and mutual courtesy.

Yet I was Western enough to feel that Chan-King and I knew each other better and had been more free to learn each other thoroughly, alone in our own household, which was growing into quite a Chinese fashion. I expected my second child and looked forward, with much hope, to the new life, for I had always been deeply maternal and wanted several children. But to Chan-King and me our love for each other was the greatly important thing in life—the reason for all the rest of our existence. We accepted the fact of birth as naturally as we did the change of seasons. Children were an essential

to our happiness, but not the dominant essential. We ordered our home for ourselves, as two lovers who had elected to pass their life together.

Chan-King expressed our views thus: "The Chinese idea is that the family is the end, the children the means of keeping it up. In the West, the children are the end, and the home merely the means of keeping them up. You and I have it perfectly adjusted, I think—the home is for all of us, and all of us have proper places in it."

Chan-King returned early one morning, and I knew, from my first glimpse of his face, that his visit had been a fruitful one. I flew to his arms, and, as he kissed me, I saw that his eyes were serene and contented.

"How is your august mother, my lord?" I asked him with a bow.

"My mother is in good health and wishes to meet her daughter-in-law," he

answered, and, in spite of the bantering tone, I knew he was in earnest.

I wanted to know how this change of feeling had come about.

"When I told them of you," said Chan-King, "my mother was visibly amazed. 'I did not understand!' she kept repeating. 'I did not understand!' And before I left, she said to me, 'If she is all you tell me she is, why do you not bring her here?' I didn't mention the fact that this was our first invitation, Margaret! Should you like to go, my dearest?"

I hesitated a moment. "Yes, but not yet," I answered.

"We will not go for a while," Chan-King assured me.

We talked a great deal about my husband's visit, and I gained new light on the actual facts of his estrangement from his family and the enormous significance that his marriage assumed in the minds of his Chinese relatives.

I can hardly exaggerate the importance of the position held by the eldest son in the higher class Chinese household. After his father, he is the male head of the family. His wife is the attendant shadow, the never-failing companion of his mother. Our phrase, "A man marries," is expressed in Chinese as "He leads in a new woman." Under the old regime he literally did so, for he invariably brought his bride to his ancestral home. The phrase for the marriage of a girl is, "She goes forth from the family." "A new woman" is the term for a bride. The Western education of many young men of the Chinese upper class has resulted in some acute readjustment in the ancestral households. Often these elder sons return, marry according to the old custom and live in their parental homes. But often, too, they marry advanced Chinese women, set up establishments and professions of their own, far from their

native cities, and live after semi-foreign ways.

In this respect, our case was somewhat typical. As I have already related, Chan-King's mother had been looking forward for years to the marriage of her eldest son with the little Miss Li-Ying. She had expected in her middle age the usual release of the Chinese woman from the bonds of youth. Having been a faithful and obedient wife and daughter-in-law, she rightfully expected to assume authority over her family, leaning on the arm of her son's wife. This younger woman would take her place in the long chain of dutiful daughters; she would help to welcome guests; she would keep up the family shrines; she would perform all manner of household duties under the supervision of her mother-in-law. On the death of her husband's mother, she would become the woman head of the family, responsible for everything, her privi-

leges and authority growing with her years, especially if she were the mother of sons. Her great mission would be to furnish children to the clan, in order that the ancestral shrines might never be without worshippers. I explain these matters at this point in order that I may not be mistaken for a moment when I tell the incident that follows. By this time, I had lived long enough in China to be almost thoroughly orientalized, in so far as my sympathies were concerned at least, and yet, when Chan-King, after talking for a while about the events of his visit home, came to a full pause and said uncertainly, "There is one thing I wish to tell you, but I am not sure you will understand," I was a trifle apprehensive.

But I answered at once: "Of course I shall understand. China has been kind to me. What have I to fear?"

Chan-King then went on deliberately:

"Not until I saw my mother again did I understand that I had done a really cruel thing to her, in depriving her of a daughter-in-law on whom she could lean in her old age. Oh, Margaret, woman's lot is not easy, with all the complexities of parents and brothers and children! And I would have atoned for my share in all this if I could—but of course there was nothing I could do, nothing at all."

And very calmly he told me that shortly after his arrival at home his mother had conferred with him seriously on her need of a daughter-in-law. In accordance with ancient customs she wished him to take a Chinese secondary wife, who would live in the family home, who would be, in a fashion, proxy for me in the rôle of daughter-in-law. Chan-King's mother offered to arrange this marriage for him and assured him that the secondary wife and her children would be well cared for and treated kindly during his long absences.

I listened incredulously, and the question I could not ask was in my eyes. I knew, of course, that the custom of taking secondary wives was not unusual among wealthy families in China, even where both wives lived under the same roof. But I had given it only the most casual thought. And not once had it occurred to me that the problem would touch my life. Brought suddenly level with it, I suffered a shock at the very foundation of my nature. I could not think, of course, in the moment that followed my husband's recital. I only felt a great roaring tide of pain rising about me, a sense of complete helplessness, such as I have never known before or since. I wonder now at my instant subjective readiness to believe that my husband had conformed to this custom of his country; that he had shaken off his Western training at his first renewed contact with the traditional habits of his race.

"Did—you——?" I asked finally, and stopped.

He came to me instantly, his arms about me. When he saw the distress in my face, he frowned, with an odd, remorseful twist of the brows.

"I wonder that you ask," he said. "How could I come back to you—and to your loyalty and trust—with the shadow of that deception between us? I made it very clear to my mother that I would never have any wife but you. It's you and I together, dear one, and no one else so long as we both shall live."

And his words had the solemn sound of a vow renewed. This high honesty of Chan-King's with me was a rock on which I founded my faith. And his final repudiation of an accepted form among his people represented a genuine sacrifice on his part, so far as his material welfare was concerned. As generously and unhesitatingly as he had made the first one, at

our marriage, he laid the second votive offering on the altar of our love. He had, you see, according to the view of his father and mother, hopelessly injured them in his marriage. Above all, he had denied in himself the great racial instinct of the Chinese to obey his parents. If he wished to please them, here was his last opportunity. The taking of a Chinese secondary wife would have been a complete atonement in their eyes. At the same time it would have meant his instant restoration to his rightful place among them—first in their affections and inheritance. The family assistance would have placed him at once in the position towards which, without it, he would probably have to struggle for years.

And later I understood how very easily he might have complied without my needing ever to know of the fact. Indeed, I could have lived in his mother's house with a second wife and never have sus-

pected that she was there in that position, so securely welded and impassive is the clan sense, the reserve and remoteness of the personal relation when the family peace and dignity are to be considered.

Some of these matters I had been aware of since my life in China began, some of them I learned that day in talking with Chan-King, and others, as I have said, I discovered gradually afterwards. But from that day, certainly, our relation subtly shifted and settled and crystallized. We both became for ever certain that we could not fail each other in any smallest thing. Into my heart came a warmth of repose, like a steadily burning lamp. We were assured of our love beyond any possibility of doubt, ever again. And for a time we experienced a renascence of youthful happiness, a fine fervour of renewed hopes and ambitions, as though spring had come again miraculously, when we had expected October.

The family letters came now regularly to Chan-King, with always a kindly message for me. Evidently relations were to be resumed on the plane of a good friendship, nothing more. But that was so much more than we had dared to hope for that we were perfectly happy to have it so.

Chan-King must have mentioned his slowly failing health, for his mother sent a worried letter to him and asked him to come home for a while once more. Chan-King decided that his affairs would not warrant his absence and wrote to her to that effect.

One morning as I sat in the sun-porch, sewing, Ah Ching appeared suddenly before me.

"Master's mother, he downstairs," he announced calmly.

I gazed at him without understanding.

"What do you say?"

Ah Ching came nearer. He held up

one hand and counted his words off on his fingers slowly. "Missee-sabe-master-have-got-one mother?" he inquired patiently.

"Yes, yes!"

"Well, he just now have come. He downstairs!"

I got to my feet. I was more frightened and nervous than I had ever been. I remembered to be grateful. I was wearing complete Chinese dress—a black skirt and blue velvet jacket. This fact assumed an amusing importance in my mind as I stood there, struggling to get myself in hand. I had planned this meeting a thousand times, and now that it was fairly upon me I was totally without resource. I progressed downstairs confusedly, running a few swift steps and then stopping short and beginning again slowly. If Chan-King had been there, I should have fled to him and left the entire situation in his hands; but

I was alone and certain of one thing only—I meant to win the love of my Chinese mother if I could. Subjectively, all the tales I had heard of Chinese mothers-in-law must have impressed me more than I had admitted, for I remembered something Chan-King had told me long before: "I cannot describe to you the importance of the mother in the Chinese household. She is a complete autocrat, with almost final authority over her sons, daughters-in-law, servants, relatives, everybody except her husband, who is usually absent on his business. Her old age is a complete reversal of the restraint and discipline of her youth."

I stopped short at the door of the drawing-room. I saw my husband's mother for the first time. She had become to me a personality of almost legendary grandeur, and I felt a little wave of surprise go over me that she looked somehow so real and alive and genuine. She

sat in a big, tall-backed chair, her hands spread flat on her knees. Her face was the face of the young mother in the photograph Chan-King had shown me, only grown older and a trifle more severe. She was dressed in black brocade, its stiff folds and precise creases accentuating her dignity. Under the edges of her skirt glimmered her tiny grey shoes, embroidered in red and green. At her side stood the male relative who had accompanied her —a Chinese gentleman of the old school, in a long gown of dark silk. Behind her chair stood a maid and two menservants.

I knew that she spoke no English, and as yet I had no knowledge of her southern dialect. There was a sharp pause in the dead-silent room while we regarded each other.

III
FIRST DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

III

FIRST DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

I CLASPED my hands in the Chinese way, smiled and bowed. My Chinese mother rose at once and took a step towards me, balancing on her tiny feet with the aid of a thick, gold-headed cane. I saw that she was unusually tall. Then, surprisingly, she extended her hand, American fashion, and I shook it, the eyes of each of us still searching the other's face. I saw in hers the look I needed for reassurance—the mingled kindness and apprehension—a trace of the anxiety that I am sure was the very counterpart of my own expression. I knew then that her heart was no more certain than mine was, and that this meeting was as important to her as it was to me.

Ah Ching brought forward my chair and we sat down together, smiling at each other, letting our gestures speak for us. Finally she stretched forth her right hand, palm down, measuring the height of a small child from the floor, inclining her head towards me, her eyebrows up in a question. I made a pillow of my two hands, laid my head upon it, eyes closed, and then pointed up. We were both delighted at this simple pantomime. The elderly man —her cousin—looked pleased in sympathy and even the three solemn servants smiled a little. She asked me in gestures where my husband was. I waved widely and comprehensively towards the street, in the general direction of the city. She nodded, settling back a trifle, drawing a long breath. We had reached the end of our power to converse without the aid of an interpreter.

When I heard Chan-King's ring at the gate, I hurried out to meet him with the

news. He was even more excited than I was and hastened ahead of me to the house. I walked very slowly in order that they might have their first greeting undisturbed, and, when I arrived, they were beaming upon each other and talking the South Province dialect over a very sleepy and cherubic infant, whom Chan-King, with paternal pride, had ordered down to greet his grandmother at once.

The retinue settled, Chan-King informed me that our mother would remain with us for six weeks. During this time, I learned the art of pantomime beyond anything I had ever hoped for in one of my undemonstrative nature. My Chinese mother and I conversed with eyebrows, hands, smiles, noddings and shakings of the head, much turning of the eyes. I had an instant affection and admiration for her, and she adopted towards me a gently confidential attitude that pleased me very much.

She had brought presents for us, in the

Chinese way: for me, a delicately wrought chain of Chinese gold in a box of carved sandalwood; for Wilfred, a dozen suits of Chinese clothes in the bright patterns worn by children of the Orient, and so becoming to the proud, wee man that, arrayed in them, he seemed already to be coming into his heritage. She also brought great hampers of fresh fruits—pomeloes, lichees and dragon's-eyes—and countless jars of preserved fish and meats and vegetables, which had been Chan-King's favourites when he was a boy at home.

Madame Liang had the Chinese woman's love for shopping. Accompanied by her cousin and the servants, we went from silk merchant to porcelain dealer, and from brass worker to rug weaver, gathering treasures. Though she carried on most of her negotiations through her cousin, she bargained with a firmness and a sense of values that I admired very much. In the silk shops she bought marvellous brocaded

satins and embroidered silks and she made me select the pattern I wanted for myself. Though she preserved most carefully the distinctive features of the dress of her own province, she was much interested in Shanghai styles and examined my wardrobe critically, noting the short sleeves with tight-fitting undersleeves and the skirts with seven plaits—not five, as in Canton, for example—at each side.

Notwithstanding the popular Western fancy that fashions never change in China, the Chinese woman is painstakingly particular as to the exact length and fullness —or scantiness—of her coats, skirts and trousers. She is carefully precise about the width of bias bands or braid or lace that she uses for trimming, the number and arrangement of fastenings, the shape and height of her collar. All of these details vary as tyrannically from season to season —under Shanghai guidance—as certain style features do with us under the leadership of

New York or Paris. Moreover, as against our four seasons, the fashion devotee of China takes account of eight, each with its appropriate style and weight of clothing.

At home Mother sewed a great deal, using her hands gracefully and very competently in spite of the long curved finger-nails on her left hand. My American sewing-machine fascinated her. She had an excellent hand-power machine at home, Chan-King explained, but mine worked with a treadle and she wished to try it. I took the tiny, brightly shod feet in my hands and set one forward and one backward on the iron trellis. And she moved them very well, alternately, and ran several seams with energy.

Chan-King, his mother and I went to Chinese cafés together and Madame Liang was pleased and amused to see that I not only used chopsticks with ease but had a real taste for Chinese food. We used to treat ourselves to all sorts of epicurean dishes:

spiced chicken and duck, sharks' fins, bird's-nest soup with pigeon eggs (my favourite delicacy), seaweed and bamboo shoots, candied persimmons, lotus-seeds and millet pudding with almond tea.

Once, in a roof-garden café, where I was wearing American clothes, my use of chopsticks aroused considerable interest among neighbouring groups of diners, and stray comments reached us, for the Chinese are always pleased to see foreigners familiar with their customs. "No doubt she is a missionary lady," a young woman remarked in my husband's native dialect. Hearing and understanding, Mother immediately said, in clear, gracious tones, "My son, perhaps your wife would like to have some American food now." Chan-King translated for me both comment and suggestion, and I felt pleased to learn that, at any rate, my Chinese mother was not ashamed, in a public place, to acknowledge her American daughter.

Mother was fond of the drama and, since Shanghai had some excellent theatres, we made up several parties during her stay.

The great semicircular stage on which a famous old historical play that we saw was acted was hung with gorgeous embroideries, laid with a thick Peking rug of immense size and brilliantly lighted by electricity—as was the entire theatre. The actors wore the magnificent official and military robes of an early dynasty. As on the Elizabethan stage, women's parts were taken by men, who achieved by cleverly constructed shoes the effect of bound feet. I found the deafening drums and gongs a little trying, at moments, and the crude property makeshifts somewhat incongruous with the wonderfully elaborate hangings and costumes. But, being familiar with the story, I understood the action and so evidently enjoyed it that Mother was surprised anew, as Chan-King afterwards told me. We sat in our balcony box, above the vague tiers of

lower seats packed with a restless audience of men, women and many children in the arms of their *amahs*. On the wide front rail of our box was the inevitable pot of tea, with room also for such fruits, sugar-cane, melon-seeds, or meat-and-rice dishes as we wished to purchase from the endless variety offered by eager boys in round caps and blue cotton gowns. Now and then an attendant came with a huge teakettle to refill our teapot, and once he offered us the usual steaming hot towels for sticky fingers. Chan-King waved these away energetically. "Awful custom," he said to me. "Unhygienic. How can they do it?" And he added something of the kind to his mother in Chinese. She regarded him with comprehension, a tiny gleam of superior wisdom in her eyes. But she made no reply.

She had taken a fancy to Wilfred, who by this time had a fair vocabulary of Chinese, which he always used in talking to his *amah*. He was a handsome child,

typically Chinese, very charming in his manner, very fond of his *amah* and his indulgent grandmother. Madame Liang would take his chin in her hands and study his features intently, nodding her head with approval. Then she would stroke his round black poll and give him melon-seeds or almonds from her pocket. Wilfred used a weird mixture of dialects—a confusion of Mandarin and the Shanghai vernacular, with a dash of Cantonese from his *amah*. Madame Liang set out patiently to teach him her own dialect as well.

When her visit was ended, our mother said to Chan-King, "This is a Chinese house, with a Chinese wife in it. Everything is Chinese. I could never have believed it without seeing, for I thought your wife was a Western woman. I am happy." And she told him again that we must come and visit her, for she needed us.

Chan-King's father, a member of an old,

established firm in the import and export trade in the Philippines, was away, looking after his business or exchanging visits with friends of his own age and rank. His home-comings were in the nature of a vacation. The management of the household depended on Madame Liang.

As she talked, I realized by her face, by Chan-King's answers, by all that I knew of Chinese family life, that we were a part of that clan and should be so always. A hint of the solidarity I now feel with my husband's family came to me. We were not separate from them; nor should we be.

After our mother was gone, Chan-King said something of this sort to me, quoting what she had said about my not being Western. "But I love you to be Western in this sense," he told me, "that you and I have companionship and freedom and equality in our love. That is what makes me happiest."

Before Chan-King and I closed the house

in Shanghai to depart for the southern hills, our second son, Alfred, was born. An American woman asked me, when he was about six weeks old, if I did not feel a sense of alienation at the sight of the wee, Oriental face at my breast. Quite simply and truthfully I answered no. My husband was not in any way alien to me. How, then, could our child be so?

His coming provided me with a welcome excuse to remain at home quietly for a short while. I now attempted to learn, at the same time, both Mandarin and the dialect of Chan-King's province—a method of study that hampered me constantly at first. But my husband was an encouraging teacher, and I began uncertainly to use my new knowledge, trying it mostly on my young son Wilfred, who was the real linguist of the family. He took my Chinese very seriously. I cannot say so much for Chan-King, who was greatly amused at my inflection.

Towards the close of the year, I decided to take a place as teacher of English and history in a Chinese girls' high school. Chan-King was surprised when I told him that I wished to teach, but he offered no objection, and watched with interest my progress through the year. I loved my teaching. Still more I loved the girls in my classes. Collectively and individually I found them supremely worth while in spirit and mind. I cannot say how lovely the young womanhood of China seemed to me. I began to yearn for a daughter, and when, towards the close of the second term, I found that I might, perhaps, have my heart's desire, I realized that my husband shared it.

In the early autumn, our mother wrote and asked us to come south for the cold season. She also expressed the hope that the coming grandchild might be born in her own province. Chan-King had been encouragingly strong for over a year, but he had

always found the northern winters hard. We decided that the time had come to fulfil our promise of visiting the ancestral home. Chan-King secured six months' leave of absence.

Within ten days we had closed our affairs temporarily, dismissed the servants, with the exception of the *amah* and the faithful Ah Ching, got our boxes together and bidden our friends farewell. The leaves were falling in the avenue; the plants were shrivelled at the edges in the sun porch; the winds blew ominously shrill under the eaves. Chan-King grew pale and began to cough again. Out of the teeth of the terrible Shanghai winter we fled into the hospitable softness of the South.

By a large steamship we started out on what was ordinarily a brief journey. But, by those war-time schedules, changes and delays were the invariable rule. After three unforeseen changes and as many

delays we reached a port just over the line in my husband's province. There we stopped, intending to go on three days later by the little, battered, tramp steamer that puffed noisily at the dock, putting off dried fruits and dyes, taking on rice and cloth and sandalwood. But we did not go on, as it happened. Instead, a tiny, smiling, competent woman physician, wearing the southern costume and possessed of a curious fund of practical wisdom in medical matters, attended me in her native hospital at the birth of our daughter Alicia.

On a vaguely grey, gently stimulating winter morning, ten days later, our bouncing little ship—for I had cajoled Chan-King into allowing me to travel—stood to, out from port, and sampans came to meet us. Like giant fish, bobbing and dipping and swaying upon the waves, these sampans with their great eyes painted on each side of the prow and their curious, upcurved sterns, came towards us in a gala-

fleet, rowed by lean, over-muscled men in faded blue cotton garments. I was very gay and much exhilarated by the soft sunshine that broke through the mist as I climbed down with Chan-King's help into one of these boats.

The harbour was busy with small craft —flat-bottomed gigs or baggage-boats besides the junks, whose square brown sails swung creaking in the wind. Two Chinese men-of-war rose over us, their vast, bulky sides painted battle-ship grey.

Out and beyond, an island not more than a mile long turned its irregular profile towards us, a long mass of huge grey boulders jutting abruptly from a sparkling sea. As we were being rowed in to the mainland, we were near enough to the island to see quite plainly the tile-roofed houses surrounded by arched verandas, repeated again and again in long, undulating lines that gave a pleasantly lacy effect. The island was shaded with trees in winter

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foliage, not the brilliant green of summer, but the sage-green and pale tan of November. Through this intermittent curtain the walls of the houses shone in dull blue and coral pink and clear grey. Jagged cacti shot up among the bulbous rocks and everywhere the scarlet poinsettia set the hills aglow with patches of brilliant colour. I loved this island instantly. I said to Chan-King, "This is our Island of the Blest, where we shall live when we are old."

At the jetty, Ah Ching went up to hail sedan-chair bearers, and soon I was borne rapidly along a few yards ahead of my husband's chair.

I was filled with a delicious elation at being in Chan-King's province, so near to the very village that he knew as a little boy. With enormous curiosity, I peeped through the curtain-flaps, which were transparent from within. We were passing through the town that lay along the water's edge—a bright, open little place, where

the small houses, with curved tiled roofs, hugged the ground. We went through the crooked streets, which were really nothing more than broad paths, at a steady pace. We left the ragged edges of the town and began to ascend the hills. I raised my curtains a trifle and ventured to look out freely. Emotion surged up in me. I wished to cry for joy in this home-coming, for it was our real home-coming together, and I felt a secret share in all the life my husband had known here.

Up the narrow, twisting path we wound, toward the hills, which were covered with a smoky, amber mist. Scattered closely along the upward road, apart from the dwellings, were small terraces enclosing plots of cultivated ground, filled with growing things. Wherever the folk could find a lush, flat place on the stony hills, robbed by deforestation of all but grass, they had planted their vegetables. These little patches of colour, coaxed by thrifty

gardeners out of the soil washed into the hill-pockets, added a festive, humorous note to the winter landscape, otherwise so brown and sear. I thought frivolously of a solemn giant wearing his party nose-gays. The hills billowed away immensely, until they were silhouettes against the dull orange and ashy purple of the morning sun struggling through the clouds. Solid, steeply curved, narrow bridges of stone made us a path over the frequent streams that rushed downward to the valley.

Here we came full upon the ancestral village of my husband's family. It lay, compact and many-roofed, upon the side of a hill, as intricately woven and inevitable-looking as a colony of birds' nests, as naturally a part of the earth as though it had sprung from planted seeds. Rows of walls ran along the main thoroughfare. There were few people astir yet and the doors were closed in all the low-eaved plaster and stone houses.

Our chairs were set down before a tall, hooded gate in a wall of stone-grey. Ah Ching knocked. The gates were opened, and servants came hurrying out, accompanied by three leaping black Chow-dogs, which barked in frantic challenge till Chan-King spoke to them and changed their menace into joyous welcome.

We entered a spacious courtyard and crossed an exquisite garden, one of the most beautiful I saw in China. An artificial lake rippled placidly, disturbed only by the darting goldfish. Laurel- and magnolia-trees darkened the paths. A thicket of bamboo wavered and cast its reflection in the water at the edge of the lake.

Chan-King helped me from the chair and together we passed into the main hall through the wide-flung doors. Madame Liang, early apprised of our arrival, was standing there, and my first sight of her gave me a renewed sense of home-coming. I was dimly aware of a large hall, at the

back of which stood a high altar, with wreaths of sweet-smelling smoke rising in straight columns before lettered tablets and brilliant images under glass cases. The glitter of golden and scarlet embroideries against the wall splintered the dimness with rays of light like sunshine through a prism. Heavily carved blackwood chairs with tea-tables and also marble-topped stools with gay, brocaded cushions were ranged about the room.

We passed through this main hall into the apartment of Madame Liang, where I was given a chair, and I sat down, suddenly remembering that I was very tired.

Other members of the family, distant relatives and first cousins, and guests, all women, came in and I was presented to them. Madame Springtime, wife of the second son, did first honours for the family. She was so very youthful—only seventeen—and so wistfully other-worldly that among those mature housewives, clever and prac-

tical managers of their households and husbands' estates, she seemed like a branch of peach-bloom. In festal garb of jade-green and lavender, embroidered shoes on her tiny feet and an embroidered head-dress crowning her shining black hair and framing the oval of her shy, smiling face, with its sloe-black eyes, she came bearing a lacquered tray and presenting to each of us sweet tea, in cups of finest porcelain with standards and covers of silver and with tiny silver spoons having flower-shaped bowls.

The pretty little tea ceremony was then repeated by various members of the family, while the small sons were given hot milk and cakes. An eager group gathered about the tiny new daughter, still sleeping peacefully.

A bubbling, busy little lady, about the age of Madame Liang, leaned over me, with a quizzical smile, and bobbed her gay, pretty head emphatically at me when my mother introduced her as Madame

Chau. Elaborately dressed in rich colours, in direct contrast to my soberly garbed mother, she was as merry as Madame Liang was grave and she tripped about on her almost invisible "golden lily" feet with an energy that yet did not destroy the grace of her "willow walk."

But the many-coloured costumes, the great curtained bed on one side, the voices —all suddenly seemed far away. And, as I wavered, smiling determinedly, I heard my husband's voice. "Mother thinks you are tired; so this woman will show you to your room, where you must lie down and rest."

Some time later, as I lay resting—with Alicia sleeping on my arm—on the bed, which had purple curtains and soft white blankets, Chan-King stepped quietly into the room.

"Feel as comfortable as you look?" he asked and, when I nodded drowsily, he touched a box of cakes.

" These were brought to you by Madame Chau, the busy little lady out there. You know"—he hesitated a moment—" she would have been my mother-in-law, if I hadn't insisted on your mother instead ! " and he gave my cheek a gentle pinch.

I was now wide-awake. " The little bird-lady out there—mother of Li-Ying ? " I asked. " Where is Li-Ying, then ? "

" They didn't tell me anything directly," Chan-King answered. " But I gather from several pointed conversations carried on in my hearing that Madame Chau has just returned from her daughter's house in Singapore. Just imagine : little Li-Ying is married too, and also has three children —two girls and a boy. I think," said my Chinese husband, with charming complacence, putting a hand over mine and stooping to kiss Alicia's pink, sleeping face, " our arrangement is much better. Sons should be older ; then daughters are properly appreciated ! "

At noon, after an hour's quiet sleep, I was again aroused by Chan-King, who stood beside a maidservant with a tray.

I sat up. "I expected to be out for luncheon," I said, preparing to rise.

Chan-King looked perturbed. "Stay where you are," he warned. "My mother has just been scolding me for allowing you to travel with a ten-days-old baby. 'As if I could do anything about it!' I told her, blaming it all on Eve in the most approved Christian fashion! She admires your spirit, but thinks that, for your health's sake, you should rest two weeks longer at least!"

I lay down meekly. "Very well," I said. "Obedience is my watchword!"

And for the prescribed time I lay in my pretty room—all my senses deeply responsive to the life going on in a Chinese household: the clang of small gongs that summoned the servants; much laughter coming in faintly or clearly as my doors were opened or shut; the tap of lily feet along

the passage; the glimmer of Madame Springtime's radiant pink or blue robes as she entered to inquire after my welfare or bring some new delicacy that had been procured for me; the smoke of incense from the altar floating into the room at intervals, with a pungent sweetness that roused vague memories and emotions. Everything in the house—hangings, clothes, furnishings—was saturated with this aroma. Mingled with a bitter smell, which is distilled by immense age, and touched with the irritative quality of dust, this odour now means China to me and it is more precious than all other perfumes in the world.

"But, Chan-King, life is nothing but food!" I protested, about the third day, when my fourth meal had been served to me early in the afternoon.

"But the quantities are small," he answered. "Much better way, don't you think, than taking great meals many hours apart?"

Early in the morning, the young maid assigned to me would bring in a bowl of hot milk and biscuit. In our apartment, at half-past eight, she would serve breakfast, consisting of soft-boiled rice—congee—with various kinds of salty, sweet and sour preparations. At eleven o'clock there was turtle soup or chicken broth. At noon came tiffin, which consisted of substantial meat and vegetable dishes, fish and soup, and dry-boiled rice. Our mid-afternoon refreshment was noodles of wheat or bean-flour, or perhaps a variety of fancy cakes. Tea, kept hot by a basket-cosy, was always on hand in every room. At seven the family dined, and, after the two weeks were up, I joined them, sitting at the first table with Mother and my husband. Dinner was an elaborate meal, in courses, with rice at the close. At bedtime came hot milk again, or sweet congee or perhaps tea, brewed from lotus-seed or almonds. I was continually nibbling. I

thought Chinese food delicious, particularly in my husband's province, noted for its delicious " crunchy " fried things.

But Chan-King had yearnings for American dishes. I gave the head cook minute instructions for preparing fricasseed chicken, fresh salads, beefsteak with Spanish sauce—even American hot cakes, and he enjoyed the American canned goods, with butter, cheese, jams and bread, which were brought in frequently from the port.

An episode that caused much merriment was Chan-King's initiation of his family into the mystery—and history—of chop suey. The rich joke of that " made-in-America " Chinese dish is penetrating to every household where the returned student is found. In Shanghai we had heard with amusement how the bewildered *chef* of the Y.M.C.A. café had gone down to one of the great trans-Pacific liners lying in port, to learn from the head cook on board just what this " chop suey," which all his

returned student patrons were demanding, might be. Now, with memories of old college club activities prompting us, and with a skilful cook to carry out our directions, Chan-King and I introduced into the ancestral home that most misunderstood dish in all the world. The family agreed that, though vaguely familiar, it was unlike anything they had ever tried before, and they decided without dissenting vote that it was superior to fricasseed chicken, Spanish steak or hot cakes.

At this time, my husband's brother, Lin-King, came home for a brief stay. I decided from photographs that he resembled his father, who was still away. Lin-King and Madame Springtime seemed well-suited to each other and happy, although the marriage had been arranged by their families and they had never seen each other before the ceremony. I decided that the old custom had much merit, after all—for other people—and said so to my

husband, adding, " When our children are grown, we must have them all marry Chinese." Chan-King looked at me long in silence and then, sighing humorously, he asked, " What of their father's example my dear ? "

Since my Chinese was still bookish and unpractised in the all-important matters of tone and local idiom, I could not converse with the family, and at the dinner-table and in my mother's apartment I was as silent and meek and pleasant of manner as Madame Springtime herself. Madame Springtime served formal tea to our many guests in absolute silence, with a sweet, fixed smile at the corners of her red mouth. I watched her with consuming interest, for she was acting as first daughter-in-law in my stead.

The machinery of life ran with the smoothness of long habit and complete discipline. The meals were served, the apartments kept in exquisite order and the

children cared for by a corps of servants trained in minutiæ by an exacting mistress, who knew precisely what she wanted. Our days were left free for the practice of small courtesies, the exchange of pretty attentions and the care of the ancestral altar.

From the cermonies that took place before this altar at various times, my husband kept himself, his wife and children sedulously aloof. It was neither asked nor expected that he would do otherwise, just as our attendance at the little mission church was accepted without question. At other times, however, I had ample opportunity to study the altar and to enjoy the beauty of its massive carvings, its elaborate incense-burners and candlesticks, its exquisitely wrought embroideries. A porcelain image of the Buddhistic Goddess of Mercy in her character of Son-Giver, set within a large glass case, fascinated me by its remarkable resemblance to certain Catholic images. But the ancestral tablets inter-

ested me more, and the respect that I have always accorded objects sacred to others was in this instance mingled with profoundly personal feelings: the inter-blended characteristics of those men and women so many years dead and gone lived on in the man who was my husband; their life currents pulsed warmly in the veins of my children; perhaps some deep insight gained beyond the grave enabled them to know how truly I acknowledged my debt to them, how earnestly I hoped those children might not prove unworthy of their heritage.

With the help of Chan-King's coaching and my personal observations, I soon learned the gracious routine of the house. At ten o'clock every morning I presented myself at the door of Madame Liang's apartment and sat with her for several hours, often over tiffin, even till tea-time, if she signified a desire for my company. If the weather was fair, we would walk in the garden,

she leaning lightly on my arm, her cane tapping on the flagstones. At times, also, tea was served here, with the small children joining us for hot milk and sweet cakes.

I was several days in getting the members of the household identified in their proper relations, for there were thirty persons gathered in that big, low-roofed, rambling compound behind the high, enveloping wall. They were nearly all women, and two-thirds of them servants. The quiet, soft-mannered woman relatives spent nearly all of their time in their own apartments. Madame Liang's powerful personality, silent and compelling, paled the colours of nearly all the temperaments around her. Her friend, Madame Chau, was immensely comforting to her, for she could not be persuaded to take anything very seriously. Madame Liang laughed with her more than with anyone else. While they busily embroidered, they gossiped, and I listened to their musical speech

with its soft southern accents and chiming, many-toned cadences.

I used to think, as I sat in a deep-cushioned chair, nursing the small Alicia, with a pot of tea at my elbow, that Madame Liang, in her gorgeous, heavily carved, black-and-orange bed, enclosed on three sides by panels of painted silk and draped over the front with silk curtains held back by tasselled brocaded bands, was a link in the Chain of Everlasting Things. She had come into the house exactly as "new women" had done century after century, and she had lived out her life unquestioningly according to their precepts and example. There was a monumental, timeless dignity about her as she sewed and talked of simple matters. In her presence, I felt young and facile and terribly unanchored.

I talked these things over with Chan-King in the dark of the night, when all the household was silent. He was inter-

ested in my reactions, knowing they were the outcome of a profound personal love for his family and sympathy with everybody in it. Spiritually, Chan-King also was in sympathy with his family. Practically—well, as I have said, there were moments when he longed for American food, and his first deed in the house was to order the bed curtains removed from our apartment.

They were removed, and nothing was said. A wonderful spirit of courtesy and toleration prevailed in the family life, with a complete absence of that criss-cross of personal criticism that our Western freedom of speech permits. Not that there were not undercurrents, intimate antagonisms here and there, personal sacrifices and sorrows. But they were not recognized, for in Chinese life individual claims are eternally relinquished in the interest of clan peace and well-being. There was one authority, and it was vested in Madame

Liang. Such a system makes for harmony and preserves the institution of the family, on which all China is founded.

Making no conscious effort, I myself yet became so imbued with this spirit that, when the Government summons came for Chan-King to report in Peking early in the new year, I choked down my anguish and said, " How splendid for us all, Chan-King ! When are you going ? "

We were in the last week of the old year, and at Madame Liang's earnest entreaty my husband delayed his departure (as the summons permitted), that, in the midst of his family, he might celebrate the most delightful of all holidays. Delicious cooking odours now drifted about everywhere, new clothes for every one were made ready, and faces took on a shining happiness.

One evening after a visit to his mother, Chan-King came to me, laughing heartily. " Mother reminds me," he said, " that for

three days it is customary for the maids, when sweeping the floor, to pile the dust carefully in a corner instead of throwing it out, lest the family good fortune should be thrown out with it. But she says of course it is only an old superstition and if you like you may tell the maid to remove the sweepings as usual." I laughed too. Then I said, "Tell Mother we shall do our part towards keeping good fortune in the family." "For three days, also," continued Chan-King, "no harsh or scolding word is to be spoken by anyone. And therefore," he went on sonorously, "your tyrannical Chinese husband will cease to lecture his American wife—who is certain to need it, though." I looked into his eyes, bright with irrepressible gaiety, and suddenly I kissed them shut, my own eyes misty. "Oh, my dearest," I whispered, "you are just a little boy at home again, in spite of the silver threads." And I smoothed the black locks, already sprinkled

with grey. "Chan, I love the Chinese New Year!" I said.

Even now I see it all again. My husband was wearing a long, dignified gown of dark green satin—unfigured, as is customary for officials—dark green trousers, short brown jacket, lined with soft fur, black satin cap and black boots. Wilfred was quite a young gentleman in long gown of blue-green silk, braid-trimmed jacket of dark green, blue trousers and red-tufted cap. Chubby Alfred was dressed in lavender jacket, scarlet trousers, a tiger-face apron of red, white and black, embroidered shoes and a gay little knitted cap. Alicia, whom the whole family loved best in her frilled white American dresses, added now a pink silk jacket and an adorable little pink and black cap, which gave an Oriental grace to her features. I wore my latest Shanghai creation, in pale lilac-and-black figured satin. Guests came and went incessantly, and we made

our calls in the village. The air was filled with odours of spice, molasses, roasted meats, seed-cakes and millet candy and with sounds of fire-crackers, gongs and happy voices.

But it was over at last. The time for my husband's departure had come.

With silent expertness, Ah Ching set about packing. In three days Chan-King was ready to go. He was coaching me in the household phrases I should need most in making myself understood without his help. Madame Liang decided that, during my husband's absence, I should assume my position as first daughter-in-law. I had no apprehension in regard to the minute, exacting duties that would devolve upon me as a right-hand companion to my husband's mother, for I loved her, but I was not sure of my tact or my deftness, and I felt strung up painfully at the thought of my immediate future.

After the hourly companionship of

months, parting from Chan-King was very terrible indeed. He was in and out of our apartment, moving about the house with restless energy, arranging final details. At last he came and stood beside me. "Say good-bye now, dearest," he whispered. "Afterwards—out there—we shall have no opportunity." He drew me close and we kissed with deep feeling, the tears in my eyes refusing to be suppressed any longer.

"Don't cry," he begged, with unaccustomed emotion. "Don't cry, or I can't leave you!" Then he held my face up and dried my tears with his handkerchief and said solemnly, "Smile at me!" And I smiled.

We went across to his mother's apartment, and she came out, the tears on her cheeks not stanched. Joined by the rest of the family, we accompanied him to the entrance and then to the gate, which stood open, almost blocked by the waiting

sedan-chair. Chan-King was in Chinese dress, and as he stood there—profile towards me—among the group of servants, giving his final directions, he seemed more Oriental, more absorbed into his country, than I remembered ever to have seen him.

He made a profound bow to his mother, with formal words of leave-taking, and gave me a grave little nod. Then, without looking back, he stepped into the chair, the curtains were drawn, and the coolies trotted off down the steep path, followed a little way by the bounding black dogs.

Mother and I stood together, after the others had gone, and watched his chair jostling down the narrow, paved way. Then we turned and looked at each other —rueful smiles on our mouths, tears in our eyes. We shook our heads at each other. I half raised a hand to my heart, then let it fall. I think both of us found our lack of mutual language a welcome excuse for silence.

Madame Liang turned toward the house. The gates closed behind us. I gave her my arm in support until we reached the doorway; then I stepped a pace behind her as she entered. Without speaking, I waited until she had knelt at the altar, and the incense was rising in clouds before the imperturbable images under their glass cases. Then I attended her to her own apartment. My life as a real Chinese daughter-in-law had begun.

IV
THE ETERNAL HILLS

IV

THE ETERNAL HILLS

AS I followed my Chinese mother into her apartments, I thought of the benevolent croakings of friends. Their words rattled through my memory like pebbles shaken in a pail: "She can never be happy with a Chinese husband!" Later it was, "It is all very well in America, but wait until she goes to China." When I had happily established myself there, "Heaven help her," said they, "if she tries to live with her Chinese mother-in-law!" In Shanghai, foreign friends had predicted, "Oh, yes, she's lovely in *your* house, but wait until you try living in *her* house!"

"This is the last ditch, Margaret," I said to myself. "Take it clear! Either

you are about to make one more argument against intermarriage or you are going to settle the question for ever so far as your case is concerned."

Mother and I went in to dinner together, somewhat later than usual. We attacked our food very bravely, eyes down. I glanced up inadvertently, and the sight of tears on her cheeks released mine too. I leaned forward and took her hand and we struggled with a sentence or two. "No tears!" I said. "Be patient!" she answered.

Next morning after the *amah* had dressed young Alicia, while the cheerful child was following me about the room with her eyes and talking merry baby talk, I took her up and went, earlier than usual, to see Mother. I found her sitting up in bed. She was dressed for the day, and the blankets were rolled back against the side of the wall, making a comfortable couch for her. Thinking of Chan-King, I looked

at the row of little cabinets extending across the back, half-way up towards the canopy. I remembered Chan-King's telling me of the year when he was still small enough to stand under these fascinatingly carved cabinets, where his mother stored her trinkets and toilet articles, embroidery silks, perfumes and the endless paraphernalia of her quiet life, and of the pride he felt when he bumped his head one day and found that he must stoop to be comfortable.

Wilfred was just high enough now to stand easily under the cabinets, but, in some mysterious fashion, the little image of him presented at this moment to my fancy became that of the small, far-away Chan-King, whom I was for ever re-creating in my mind as I went about the house where he had lived his pleasant youth.

This morning I laid Alicia on the bed near Madame Liang. She bent over her

and made a *moue* into the rosy face. I was much pleased when Madame Liang was unusually attentive to Alicia, though my sense of justice always reminded me that my own Scotch mother would probably have made more of the boys. But our Alicia was the first daughter in two generations of my husband's family, and, even though the sons were of priceless value to the clan, she was loved and cherished tenderly. It seemed to me at times that the household was more fond of her than of all the boys together, including Madame Springtime's young Kya-Song, who filled the left wing of the compound with his shouts of glee as he played riding-horse on his precarious bamboo stool. I remembered with amusement the Western idea that daughters are unwelcome, always, in Chinese families.

While Madame Liang patted the baby, talking to her coaxingly, I asked what she wished me to do.

She indicated on her dressing-table a box of stereoscopic views, which I brought to her. They formed a complete story, but had become very much confused. As I could read the foreign titles, would I kindly arrange the pictures in proper sequence? The ease and speed with which I accomplished this task won her instant approbation.

This was merely one of the numberless small things I did for her thereafter. In my new estate I was in attendance on my mother during many hours of the day. I walked with her in the garden in fine weather, I sat with her and sewed, threading needles as for my own mother and even helping her to make those marvellous small shoes that she fashioned so carefully to the form of her feet. One day I told her how amazed I had been when I first learned from Chan-King that Chinese wives made the family shoes, but how readily I could understand, when I

saw the dainty embroidered foot-wear he referred to, that shoemaking was indeed a womanly craft.

She and Madame Chau used to take great pride in making for themselves the most frivolous of shoes. Madame Chau's were the smaller, being barely two and a half inches long, whereas those of my mother were twice that length and different in shape. I discovered the reason for this: Madame Chau clung tenaciously to the old style; but Mother had gradually let out her bandages and altered their arrangement, keeping pace with the change that followed the abolition of the old custom.

I became deeply interested in the custom of foot-binding. In Shanghai, all the pupils of my school and (with certain notable exceptions) the women of my social world had natural feet, and the majority of them wore American pumps and Oxfords or English boots. Bound feet, though I saw

them frequently in public, seemed very remote. But now, save the girls of twelve and under, who had profited by the new order of things, the women among whom I lived all had bound feet. It may be worth noting, when one remembers how America, with its own great unwashed, jokes at the expense of the Chinese of whatever rank or station, that, in accordance with the fastidious cleanliness of upper-class Chinese, the bound feet were exquisitely cared for, and the narrow, white, specially woven bandages were changed every two or three days. As I watched the daintily shod women of my mother's household, I realized that never before had I appreciated, in reading the literature of my adopted country, the aptness of comparing the walk of a woman with bound feet to the grace of bamboo swaying in the breeze. Never had I suspected the charm attached to twinkling flashes of embroidery beneath a panelled,

many-plaited skirt. My own number-four feet assumed alarming proportions. I grew positively ashamed of them. One day as Mother and I sat together in arm-chairs, with a blackwood tea-table between us, I placed my feet in line with hers and said, sighing, "Ah, they look very bad, indeed!" She waved a deprecating hand. "Never mind," she said with courtesy and truth, "they may not look so well, but they certainly walk better."

Of course I was glad that the small Alicia belonged to Young China, and would purchase no golden lilies with a cask of tears, as I had often read that every woman with bound feet must do. But I now decided that the cask must have been filled in the years of girlhood. For the women about me seemed to suffer no pain —only an occasional numbness, relieved by brisk massage from knee to ankle under the hands of a maid. I was surprised at the ease and energy with which they got

about, merely balancing with small forward and backward steps when stopping—unless they had a servant's arm, or a cane, for support.

I thought our mother infinitely superior in the grace and dignity of her carriage. Madame Springtime, who had slightly enlarged her feet, at the command of her husband, moved slowly and with a lack of grace characteristic of the younger generation. Madame Chang moved ponderously and with difficulty. Madame Chau hurried with quick, fluttering steps. On occasion she would even run races with Alfred, our merry second son, now two and a half years old. She would catch his hand, lean forward and hurry him the length of the hall, the two of them laughing gaily. Now and then I would fold my hands, balance on my heels and essay a " willow walk," to the great amusement of Mother and Madame Chau.

Life went on very evenly for me in my

Chinese mother's house after my husband's departure. His father had not come home for his semi-annual visit, and the second son was away again. Even the quiet-mannered third son, who looked just like his mother, and who used to bring me roses from the garden every day, had sailed for the island port to take his place in the family business. We were under a benevolent matriarchate in the snug compound among the brown hills now brightening to springtime green.

Madame Liang was infallibly generous and kind. I never heard her speak sharply except occasionally to servants who had by their carelessness caused something to go amiss, impeding the smooth progress of daily family life. I used to watch her with interest as she directed the household affairs from the throne of her great bed. She rarely gave her orders at first hand, but would summon a relative or an upper servant, who would receive and pass them

down to those for whom they were intended. This imparted to her orders an empress-like finality and importance. The servants gave her complete allegiance.

She took great pride in conducting me through the complicated structure where generations of Liangs had lived and died. Extending back from the main establishment was a series of smaller ones like it, each with its own courtyard, its main hall containing the family altar, its private chambers opening on each side. Similar chains of " homes within a home " extended east and west, at right angles to this central chain. Mother showed me the rooms she had occupied as a bride, with the chamber where Chan-King was born, when the older Madame Liang ruled affairs with a firm yet kindly hand. I felt deeply moved by all this, more than ever a part of the family.

I made many small mistakes, I know, in my effort to practise the toleration, industry

and courtesy exemplified in that family group, but Mother, unlike many of the over-sensitive, easily offended Chinese women of her class, was divinely patient. She never asked of me anything that she deemed unfitting for me and she showed a wise discrimination in all the small tasks she assigned. I sometimes accompanied her to the temple, or to the ancestral graves, but only as a spectator. Her religious toleration required no compromise. She wanted me to see where grandparents and great-grandparents were laid to rest. She knew I was interested and filled with respect. To Madame Springtime fell the task of caring for the family altar and keeping up the daily devotions before the sacred shrine.

This young wife was in every way so typical of the old-fashioned Chinese woman, trained but not educated, disciplined but not broken, that I found her a continual source of interest. She was naturally shy

and silent, but after a time we talked a little, and one day she showed me her bridal trunks of white lacquer with red and gold decorations, filled to the top with her bridal finery, exquisitely folded, and the clothes for her first child, which had been provided by her parents as a part of her wedding outfit.

This latter custom of Chan-King's native province appealed to me. It was typical of the many simplicities I found among my adopted people. Those small, brilliant-coloured garments of padded silk and brocade and linen were symbols of hope, good omens for happiness and a fruitful marriage. Accustomed as I was to falsely Puritanic ideals concerning the important realities of life—marriage and birth—their frank attitude toward fundamentals, their unquestioning acceptance of the facts of existence came as a pleasant surprise to me.

I liked also the curious contrast between

their simple view of elemental things and the formality and rigour of their personal etiquette. It is the manner of an old and ever cultivated race, who have long since ceased building at the foundation and are now occupied with the decorations of life.

Their scheme of daily living is based on the firm belief that the normal mode of human existence is family life. To this end it must be preserved at any cost. Life cannot develop in discord. If the amenities are worth anything at all, they are worth preserving constantly and at whatever personal sacrifice.

Life behind the arched gate was so pleasant and so filled with small, daily occupations that I thought little of going about. The village had no theatre. On festal days performances were given by travelling troupes, on temporary stages, in temples or private houses. But we occasionally attended the theatre in the great city

near, and, when we had guests staying with us for several days, they sometimes accompanied us. We were rather an impressive sight, I fancy, borne at a brisk trot, in half a dozen sedan-chairs, down the irregular path at dusk, preceded and followed by menservants carrying lanterns.

The children led a sheltered, happy existence, with servants and young relatives to amuse them indoors or without, as the weather permitted. They were liberally supplied, by their indulgent grandmother, with pocket-money in the form of handfuls of coppers instead of the strings of cash that sufficed an earlier generation. From passing venders they bought bows and arrows of brightly painted bamboo, whistling birds and theatrical figures of coloured earthenware, inflated rubber toys and an endless variety of rice-flour cakes, sesame-seed confections, peanut taffy and millet candy. On festal days the choice was

wider than ever, with fluffy bunches of sugar wool (fine-spun syrup) and brittle candy toys blown from molten taffy with all the glass-blower's art, in the form of lanterns, birds and fish, mounted on slender sticks. At certain seasons, there were huge fish made of bamboo frames, paper-covered and realistically painted, which swam in a breeze with lazy grace, or kites similarly fashioned to represent birds and dragons which winged upward in fascinating flight.

There was a limited foreign settlement in this same city and several of the American and British women came to call on me. Some of them were frankly curious to know how I had come through the " ordeal by family," as one of them expressed it, though of course they were very tactful.

Mother was much interested in these visitors, many of whom—if able to speak Chinese—I presented to her. When they left, she would often ask questions as to their nationality, their husbands' occupa-

tion, the number of their children. As for that question, most of them confessed to one child or, occasionally, two. But I shall never forget the call of a strikingly handsome, auburn-haired woman and the conversation that followed her departure. In reply to the usual inquiry, I said, "No children at all! But she has five *dogs* and has just bought, in Shanghai, two more, which are coming down on the next steamer."

"No children at all, and five—*seven dogs!*" said Mother in tones of horror. And then we burst out laughing. But quickly she grew sober. "Foreign women do not care for children," she said.

"I do," I protested. "I like many children."

"You," said my mother with a smile, "are a Chinese wife."

But happily my next caller was a sweet-faced American woman, the proud mother of six, two of whom she brought

with her. So our national reputation was saved.

In these days, I thought a great deal about intermarriage as a problem. When in Shanghai, a returned student who stayed with us for several days had said to Chan-King afterward, "I almost married an American girl while I was in college. I wish now I had been brave enough to do so." At that time I felt very sorry for the unknown girl who had missed all the happiness that was coming to me, and now I was more sure than ever of the true quality of my happiness. There was no doubt at all on that score. But I realized the many, many ways in which everything might have been spoiled. Had my husband been less considerate, less sincere and loyal, had his family been less kindly and broad-minded, had I myself been capricious and wilful or unable to adapt myself to surroundings, I might every day have plumbed the depths of misery. I decided

that no rules could be made about intermarriage. It was an individual problem, as indeed all marriage must be. So, when a young girl from home wrote to me for advice, believing herself in love with a Chinese classmate, and concluded, "You, Mrs. Liang, must settle the question for me," I answered, as I should not have done a year earlier: "That is a question that you two alone are competent to settle. No one can advise you safely, for a mistake either way may result in lifelong unhappiness. But I might venture to suggest that love strong enough to stand the test of intermarriage does not seek advice. It is sure of itself."

In a household where only my eldest son and I spoke English, my lingual struggles were unexpectedly mild. Chan-King had left me a list of everyday phrases, and my ear grew very keen in my constant efforts to understand the rapid speech going on around me all day long. In a

short while I could understand virtually everything said to me.

During the long conversations that Mother and I had in the quiet of the evening, we talked much of Chan-King and she displayed treasured relics of his boyhood: a small jacket of deep red velvet, a worn cap, a silver toy and the identical schoolbook in which he began the study of English. I loved them all, loved her the more for cherishing them and was made supremely happy by being given a photograph of Chan-King at an earlier age than any he possessed. She was very much interested in all our photographs too. She was vastly amused at Chan-King arrayed for college theatricals and, when I brought out pictures of myself at all ages, of my parents and grandparents, she traced family resemblances with unerring perception. Sometimes we looked at magazines that Chan-King sent us from the capital or talked of various foreign customs. I soon

found it very easy to talk with her and with her help I learned also to read and write simple Chinese characters, for a very liberal-minded father had given her educational advantages enjoyed by few girls of her generation.

When the hands of her small ebony clock pointed to twelve, she would touch my hand gently and say, "Time for you to sleep."

"But first I must write to Chān-King," I would answer.

She would shake her finger at me with kindly caution. "It is too late," she would answer. "You must sleep."

I would hold out firmly on this point. "But, my mother, if I do not write to Chan-King, I cannot sleep!"

She would assent then, and next day I would carry the pages to show her, for my letters to Chan-King and his voluminous responses were a source of much amusement to her. I translated these letters to her as faithfully as my limited Chinese

would allow, and in my letters always added messages dictated by her.

I was learning the romanized method of writing Chinese, which for our dialect has been remarkably developed and standardized. Mother was much interested when I showed her how to write familiar words with foreign letters, and Chan-King always answered these messages in kind, though his mother and he carried on a regular correspondence in the Chinese characters.

"Those children write long letters to each other, fifteen and twenty pages at a time," she often told her friends with manifest delight.

Beyond this personal companionship with my mother, which I enjoyed very much, there was no restraint put upon me in any way. I was free to walk out alone, to return calls and to shop in the city.

My own sense of fitness prompted me always to present myself at the door of my mother's apartment before I left the

house, to explain to her the nature of my errand and to ask for her approval. Accepting the little formality for the courtesy it was, she never once demurred. She was accustomed to this respect, and I saw no reason for withholding it. All the invitations I received from acquaintances, either foreign or Chinese, I declined or accepted as she advised, because I relied upon her unfailing knowledge of people and social customs.

Twice during those months of Chan-King's absence death came near. Once it was a clever young boy, an only son, in whom high hopes had been centred; and, then, the young girl who had accompanied Mother to Shanghai. She was no servant in the ordinary sense, but an orphaned distant relative of Mother's. Madame Liang was always kind and generous with her, and when, soon after her return from the trip to Shanghai, which had been a great event in her quiet life, a promising

marriage offer was made, she was sent forth to her new home with a complete bridal outfit. Hearing at last of our presence in the family home, she put on her wedding-dress of pale green and came to see me. Her evident pleasure in the meeting touched me poignantly. With bright eagerness she told me of her husband, her kind mother-in-law. With pride she described her tiny son. After a gay hour with the children she left, promising to come again. But I never saw her afterwards. Death took her abruptly from her happiness.

I began to think of death as something not so remote after all. Several times a group of us—children and cousins and friends and servants—made short chair-trips into the hills. The sight of thousands of graves, their stones whitening the hillsides for miles in some places, impressed me more and more with the comparative shortness of life.

Scattered over many of these hills are curious monuments of stone, called " widow arches," each one standing alone, usually by a roadside, in commemoration of a faithful wife who, in ancient days, killed herself at the death of her husband. A widow who wished to make this sacrifice would, after a short lapse of time, announce her intention of committing suicide. The members of her family would erect a high stage for her and invite relatives and friends to attend the ceremony. At the chosen hour, the lady would hang herself, and a high stone arch would later be erected as a memorial of her devotion and heroism.

In the Chinese family, the widow who does not remarry receives honour and veneration second only to the mother-in-law. With age, she acquires added authority. She is not forbidden to remarry, but the conditions of second marriage are made difficult enough to discourage any but the

most intrepid. The children of her first husband remain in the house of his people, and the family of her second husband do not give her any too cordial a welcome.

One naturally prefers free will in these things. Yet I had a whole-hearted sympathy with the idea of life-widowhood, long before I dreamed it was to be my portion. Painful as the sight of the "widow arches" was to me at first, my convictions made the Chinese view of them seem not unnatural, though I knew the custom had been forbidden by imperial edict some two centuries earlier.

Even in the days when Chan-King and I believed that our love would somehow give us earthly immortality, the idea was strong in me that, to those who loved truly, death could only extinguish the torch for a moment to relight it in the clearer flame of eternity. Then, I cherished this thought in the background of my mind. Now, I live by it.

For this reason, too, I have always found the Chinese attitude towards the dead very comforting. They never for a moment relinquish hold on their loved ones. The anniversary of the day of death is as festal an occasion as the day of birth. The pageant of life marches without a break, birth to death and beyond, and birth again, the generations endlessly touching mystical hands, until the individual feels himself to be part of an endless procession that passes for a moment into a white light and out again, feels himself touching those who came before and those who come after —one of a long line, bound together irrevocably.

With all their ethics of personal sacrifice and their preoccupation with the idea of eternity, the Chinese have no ascétic contempt for the material world and they earnestly desire and seek length of days. Among the varied symbols and characters used to express good wishes—as health,

honour, riches—those for "long life" hold pre-eminence. They are wrought in rings, bracelets, hair ornaments, and are sewed into bridal garments and upon children's little coats and caps. I always felt this enormous respect for life in all their daily customs—the preparing of the baby clothes when the bride left her father's house, the nurturing and strengthening of the clan with many children, the reverent regard for the graves of the ancestors to whom the living owed their grace of existence.

On several occasions I accompanied my mother on her visits to the ancestral graves. I remember the last time, only a few days before Chan-King's return, that I walked with her, holding one of her hands, while with the other she grasped her gold-headed cane. She wore a light costume—a plaited black skirt and lavender "coat" and lovely black kid shoes. Servants followed with her baskets of offerings.

We stood at a respectful distance, in

silence, while she performed her rites. All about were placed papers, weighted with small stones. She knelt and, clasping her hands, devoutly repeated her prayers under her breath. Then, assisted by a servant, she burned the paper symbols of refreshment and replenishment for the dead. Fire-crackers were exploded to clear the air of evil spirits, and the ceremony was over.

As we returned to the village, everywhere people called out to her from their doorways and she invariably replied with friendly courtesy. In the outskirts we stopped for rest and a visit to the house of a cousin. When we left ,many of the relatives and friends went with us a little way, crying out repeatedly, " Good-bye ! " and " Come again, come again soon ! " I saw the sunlight on Tiger Mountain ; I smelled the saltness of the sea. As we passed around the great boulders that hid them from our sight, the modulated cadence of

their "Come again, come again soon!" floated to us. It was the last time I should hear it as I was then, and I did not even dream that it was so.

For a month I had been expecting the arrival of Chan-King. His letters were always love-letters, with added paragraphs saying that he was getting on well with his work and would have much to tell me of it when he came home. At last a letter told us to expect him by a certain steamer, on a certain day. But schedules were still in confusion because of the war. That steamer was delayed, and Chan-King sailed for another port, meaning to change there. More delays followed. More letters of explanation. More delays again. Mother and I both became heart-sick with hope deferred. At last, one morning, worn out with watching, I slept later than usual, and on that morning Chan-King came home.

Awakened out of a long drowse, I heard a stir in the quiet house, the clang of a

gong, a rush of padded footfalls in the outer hall. Happy voices mingled in greeting at the door of my mother's apartment. I threw on my robe, tucked Alicia under my arm and ran across the room, flinging the door open even as Chan-King had his hand raised to knock at the panel. I saw him dimly in the wavering light. He was smiling, and behind him stood his mother, also smiling. Each of us solemnly spoke the other's name, trying to erase, with a long look, the memory of all those months of absence. Then he saw the baby. "Li-Sia, my thousand catties of gold!" he said, in Chinese. Alicia smiled and held out her arms to him. "She recognizes him!" said Mother, in pleased surprise. We three stood together a moment, silently, gathered around the child. I felt myself more deeply absorbed into the clan—a Chinese woman, dedicated anew, heart and spirit, to my adopted people.

Later, Chan-King explained to me the

reason for his home-coming. His legal service for the Government had been completed and his expected appointment had come at last. We were to return to America, where he would be in the Chinese consular service. After a period in this work, a bright future in the diplomatic field seemed assured. It meant leaving my beloved China, where I had firmly taken root. But we agreed that the exile would be for only a few years and that we would return surely to our Promised Land, there to enjoy our span of "long life with honour."

Now our leisurely existence was broken up to a degree. Almost immediately we set about preparations for our new life in America. Chan-King looked forward with absorbing interest to the change, almost as if he were going home. My instant reaction was one of joy, swiftly followed by sorrow at giving up things now loved and familiar. I wanted to appear cheer-

ful, as a duty to those around me. I did not want to seem too cheerful, lest Mother should think me glad to go.

In this period, at last, I met my Chinese father. One beautiful day in early autumn, Chan-King and I went down to the city, returning in mid-afternoon. As our chairs were set down before the entrance, the gatekeeper announced to Chan-King his father's arrival. I was filled with swift apprehension. Again chance had decided my costume: I was wearing, not the conservative Chinese garb in which I had met my mother, but a frilly American dress of blue and white summer silk, a white lace hat with black velvet and pink rosebuds and white kid shoes. Chan-King had on white flannels and a Panama hat. The latter he handed to a servant, as also his cane. As we entered the main room together, a figure rose from beside Mother to receive us. I saw an elderly man of medium height, with grim, smooth-

shaven face and grey hair. He was wearing a long gown of deep blue silk, with a black outer jacket and the usual round cap of black satin. My husband first greeted him and then presented me. While I stood uncertain, there was a courteous inclination of the grey head, the grimness of expression dissolved in a wonderfully winning smile, and, surprisingly, as Mother had done, my Chinese father extended his hand. I felt that he was interpreting me in the light of all she had told him, that his cordial handclasp and kindly words of welcome were his ratification of her judgment. Then, with a courtly gesture, he assigned me to his lately occupied chair beside Mother, while he and Chan-King took seats together opposite us. Mother smiled into my eyes with her happiest expression. I felt that Chan-King's background was complete. Long before, I had conceived of it as harsh and threatening, but I had now proved it to be wholly kind and protecting. At my

recent fear of this last test I wondered and smiled.

Father was much gratified at finding his grandsons able to converse fluently in his native tongue. He would gather them all about him for an hour at a time, asking questions to test their practical knowledge, or telling stories to amuse them. Alicia also delighted him. At simple Chinese commands, she would now clasp her hands or fold them and bow profoundly. Mother was very proud of her wee granddaughter and would often say, " She is just as Chan-King was at her age ! " And her husband would invariably assent with an indulgent smile. There existed between these two —conservative types though they were— an evidence of mutual affection and respect, of real companionship, that touched me profoundly. I was glad that Father was to be with Mother when Chan-King and I took ourselves and our three children from the home where, according to the old

Chinese custom, we all rightfully belonged.

The question of leaving one or more of our children there for a time was discussed one afternoon later.

"Under ordinary circumstances," said Father to Chan-King, "you would go alone, as your brother does, leaving your entire family with us. At the very least, you would allow one child to remain in your stead. But of course your mother and I understand that these are not ordinary circumstances. Your wife is an American. She has been considerate of our point of view in many ways—more than we expected—and in this matter we do not fail to consider hers, which is no doubt your own as well. We understand that according to the American view the children belong with their parents, always. We cannot, of course, deny your right to this manner of living. But we want you to feel that, if you can leave even one child with us, we shall be very happy. You

understand what protection and care will be given it."

For a moment there was silence. My heart was very full, and, even had it been my place to speak, I should have been unable to do so. Mentally I pictured Mother's loneliness at losing so many of her children. Vainly I tried to imagine our home in America with even one small face missing. I watched my husband, noted the tiny traces of conflict in his face, impassive perhaps to the casual glance. At last he spoke.

"Father, mother," he began earnestly, "we do indeed appreciate your great kindness and generosity. You will understand that, just as you understand most truly our situation. We know that here with you our children would have many advantages that we, perhaps, cannot give them. But which one could we leave to enjoy those advantages? Not Wilfred, for he is our eldest son, on whom we place great

dependence. And Alfred—of us all he seems least fitted for the southern climate. The summer heat has left him a little pale and listless. He needs the sea voyage. As for Alicia, she is the baby, and our only daughter. Do not think us unmindful of all you have done. But I fear we should not know how to make our home without our children."

After all, it was evidently not unexpected. They shook their heads a trifle ruefully at each other and then smiled.

"Very well," Father assented. "But this you must promise: that at intervals, whenever your work permits, you will come back—all of you—and spend a year with us again. Do not let the children forget us nor their Chinese speech. In four years, at most, all come back together."

We promised readily, Mother and I repeating the phrase to each other, "In four more years, all come back together." Our eyes were full of tears.

That night I said to my husband, "We should have left one of them."

But Chan-King was a clearer thinker, just then, and knew the truth of this situation better than I did. "Which one?" he asked me significantly, in a tone that made me see the essential hollowness of my protest.

On the Sunday before our ship sailed, Chan-King and I bade farewell to China. In company with our parents and many other relatives we walked to the top of a very high hill, where an old temple, which commanded a magnificent view for miles around, crouched contentedly among the rocks, in the grey sunshine. It was a temple of the three religions, with huge stone images of Confucius, Buddha and Lao-tse grouped in its outer court. Together, Chan-King and I climbed to the crest of the terraced rock. I looked about me, down upon the proud, bright little village, alert and colourful on the hill-side, upon the

scattered fertile patches in the midst of the barren mountains where tigers build their lairs. The eternal hills swept the lowering, clouded skies, rolling away from us, silent, shadow-filled. A surging love of the very soil under my feet, a clinging to the earth of China, overwhelmed me. I wished to kneel down and kiss that beloved dust. "Oh, Chan-King," I said, shaking with emotion, "This is home! I wish we were not leaving, even for a day!"

"We will come again soon," he said, in Chinese, "and we will live here when we are old."

That evening we sat together in the quiet garden. From Mother's apartments came the sound of her young nephew's voice as he chanted his morrow's lessons. We heard the subdued merriment of two little maids, teasing each other in the hall beyond. Along the outer path a sedan-chair passed with rhythmic sway, the bamboo supports creaking a soft accompaniment to

the pad-pad of the bearers' sandalled feet.

From varying distances came the clang of a brass gong, shuddering on the stillness, the staccato sound of slender bamboo sticks shaken together in a cylindrical box, the measured beat of a small drum-rattle, as the different street venders announced their wares. Over the hills, now purple in twilight, the round moon swung leisurely into the violet sky. Strange breaths of incense were wafted about us. The sea-breeze stirred the branches of a dragon's-eye tree close by, where the ripening fruit-balls tapped gently against each other like little swaying lanterns. For long moments we sat in silence, with clasped hands.

Out of that silence my husband spoke softly, words I had long yearned to hear: "Absence, Margaret, teaches many things. Once it showed you your own heart. This time it has taught me to believe with you in the immortality of love like ours. Physically, we may be separated at times,

but mentally, spiritually, you and I are one for all eternity."

The moon rose higher, golden, perfect, even as our love.

A few days later, we sailed for America. The rest may be told in a few words, for, after all, no words could adequately tell it. A week after our arrival in America, Chan-King was stricken with influenza. For several years he had been in the shadow of a slow illness, but with stout resistance and such buoyant recurring periods of good health that we had for a time almost forgotten that early and sinister threat. But those years of struggle were all thrown into the balance against him when the decisive hour came. After six days, he died. Quietly, with terrible implacability, death closed over him. We feared a sudden end, it is true, but were still incredulous of such a calamity. We gave each other what assurance we could: our ultimate farewells were simple renewals of faith, a

firmer tightening of our hands for our walk in darkness. "Of all the world, you are my love," he said, many times. "More than anyone else you have understood, you have been unfailing—you have been my wife." And, almost as he spoke, my arms held no longer my living beloved, but only the clay where his spirit had been and would come no more.

So, by the visible evidences, my history is finished. But it has begun anew for me, not as I wished, not as I hoped, but on a level that I can endure. For I have my children and my memories and my home in China, which waits with the gentle healing of sight and sound and place . . . and I have learned that in love, and only in love, we can wring spiritual victory out of this defeat of the body.

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